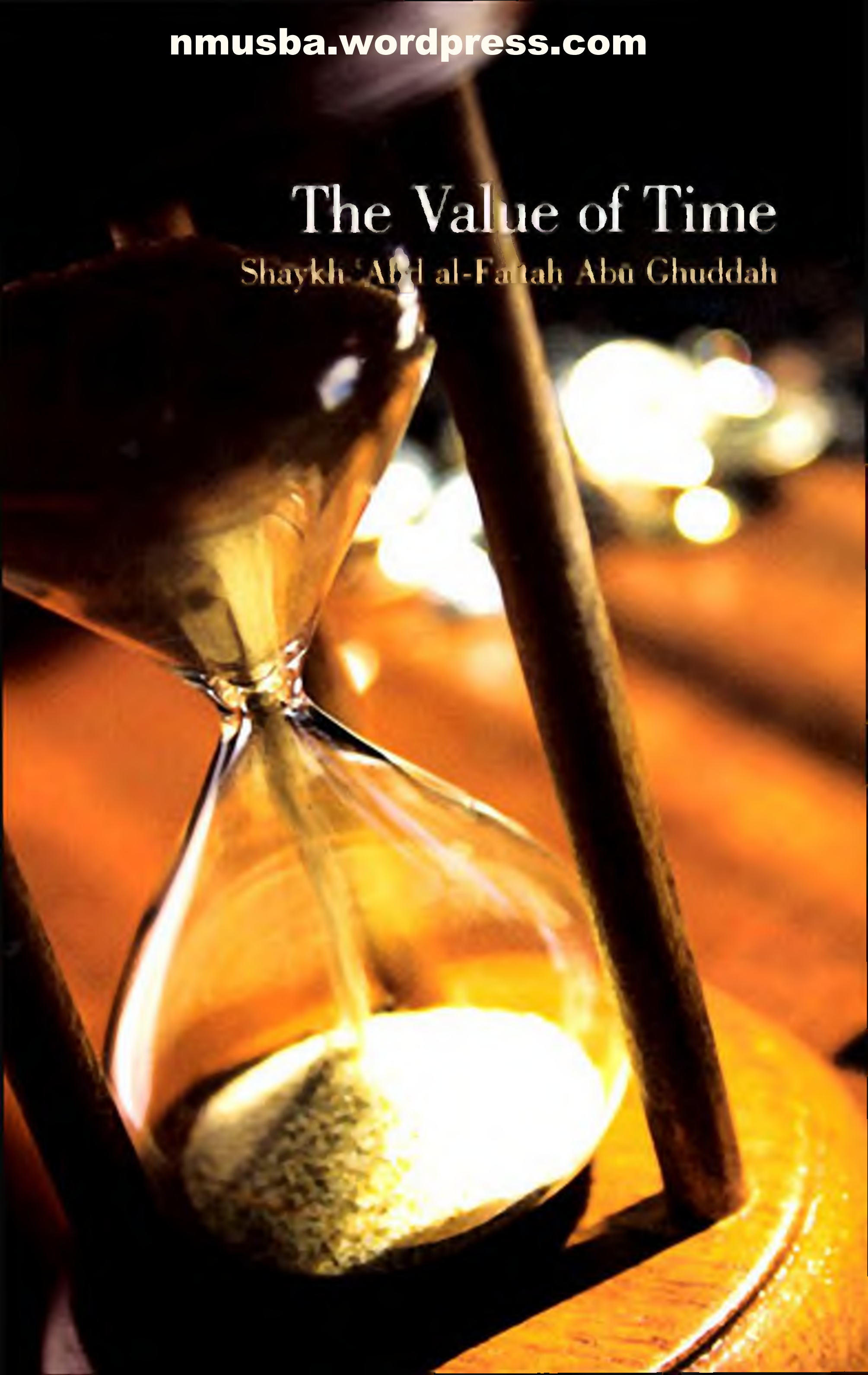

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The Value of Time
Shaykh 'Abd al-Fattah Abu Ghuddah

THE VALUE OF TIME

by

ʿAbd al-Fattāḥ Abū Ghuddah

TRANSLATED BY

Yusra al-Ghannouchi





CONTENT

SHAYKH ʿABD AL-FATTĀḤ ABŪ GHUDDAH was born in Syria in 1917. One of the outstanding Muslim scholars of the 20th century, *Shaykh* Abū Ghuddah was a leading scholar in the field of *ḥadīth* and Ḥanafī school of *fiqh*. He studied in Syria and Egypt specialising in Arabic language, *ḥadīth*, *sharīʿah*, and psychology. He had many prominent teachers, among them *Shaykh* Rāghib al-Tabbākh, *Shaykh* Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad al-Zaraqa, *Shaykh* ʿĪsā al-Bayanūnī, *Shaykh* Aḥmad al-Kurdī, and the renowned Ottoman Scholar *Imām* al-Kawtharī. He taught *uṣūl al-fiqh*, Ḥanafī *fiqh* and Comparative *fiqh* at the University of Damascus. He also taught at the King Saud University and *Imām* Muḥammad ibn Saud Islamic University. He was buried in al-Baqī' cemetery in Madinah 1997.



FOREWORD

Shaykh ʿAbd al-Fattāḥ Abū Ghuddah (1917-1997), the author of the present work, was one of the leading scholars of the 20th century, especially in the field of *ḥadīth* and the sciences related to *ḥadīth*. He was taught by over 200 scholars, drawn from the fields of *ḥadīth*, *fiqh*, and other Islamic disciplines. Among them was the renowned Ottoman scholar and expert of *fiqh*, *ḥadīth*, and the science of *rijāl*, *Imām* Zāhid al-Kawtharī. *Shaykh* Abū Ghuddah taught *uṣūl al-fiqh*, *fiqh* and comparative *fiqh* at the University of Damascus. He also taught at the King Saud University and Imam Muhammad ibn Saud Islamic University.

The *Shaykh* was a traditionist (*muḥaddith*) and scholar of great repute, with an in-depth knowledge of the history of scholarship and scholars in Islam. He has written extensively on different aspects of *ḥadīth*, *fiqh* and Islamic education, and his books are a model of objective historical scholarship. He has created an extraordinarily rich and detailed mosaic of scholarship and learning in the Islamic world.

As author of numerous valuable books, he was eminently qualified to undertake this present task, entitled *The Value of Time in the Lives of Scholars*. We are fortunate to have this work undertaken by him. He has done extensive research to collect material

for this book and illuminate the precious examples from the past. The aptitude with which he brings to life those great scholars and works of the past succeeds in bringing history to life and filling us again with invigorating and inspirational thoughts.

The book provides vivid insight into a subject of great importance, not only for students and scholars, but every human being who regards time as a valuable gift from God and is keen to appreciate this gift. I cannot imagine that we will ever have a more profound portrait of the value of time and its appreciation by earlier Muslim scholars. This is a pioneering work in the sense that according to my knowledge, it is the first study that is exclusively devoted to the value of time.

In particular, the book highlights the value of time in the field of knowledge and its people. It teaches us how to appreciate this invaluable gift and blessing from God, and how to benefit from it. It reminds us of the need to manage our time well, and avoid falling into excessiveness in speech, food, gatherings and meetings. By doing this we can achieve the most eminent legacies, and the best and most lasting of deeds.

The *shaykh* reminds us how the pious predecessors and early scholars, who are for us a model of all good deeds and an example for every virtue, valued this immense gift, and how every moment of their lives was calculated to be spent in the pursuit of knowledge.

The *Shaykh* himself exemplified devotion to the service of knowledge and the treasuring of time. Even while travelling he would keep himself busy in reading or writing. Once while he was at the airport in Karachi, the flight was delayed, and rather than waste time he read Anwār Shah Kashmīrī's *al-Tasrīḥ bi Ma Tawatara fī Nuzūl al-Masīḥ* to his students Muftī Shāfiʿī and Maulana Yusuf Binnauri who were there to see him off. I remember when he came to England on the occasion of the Sultan of Brunei prize ceremony in his honour. I was at the airport with

Maulana Zahid al-Rashidi when he left, and we spent the time until his departure reading extracts of *al-Adab al-Mufrad* of *Imām* Bukhārī.

The *Shaykh*'s writings embody the beauty of the Arabic language. His style is eloquent and flows smoothly keeping the reader absorbed. I hope its readers will enjoy this book and will benefit from it.

The present English translation of *The Value of Time* from the Arabic original by Yusra al-Ghannouchi is timely. The translator deserves congratulations in undertaking this great task and thus helping the English-speaking world gain access to this precious work. The publishers also deserve our gratitude for making it available to the English reader. May Allah reward all those who participated in its production, and guide us to benefit from this effort.

Mohammad Akram Nadwi
Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies
Oxford, UK
July 2003



PREFACE

All praise be to Allah, and that is sufficient a praise, and prayers and peace be upon His chosen servants, at the forefront of whom is our master and messenger, Muḥammad al-Muṣṭafā, and upon his family, his companions, his followers and all those who were guided by them and followed them.

These are a few pages which I have written to elucidate, *The Value of Time in the Lives of Scholars*, through which I wished to highlight the value of this immense blessing that is the setting of life, in particular in the field of knowledge and its people, and how it can give rise to amazing wonders, if one knew how to benefit from it, if one managed one's time well, and avoided falling into excessiveness in speech, food, gatherings and meetings. Thus one would achieve the most eminent legacies and the best and most lasting of deeds. One's remembrance will be eternalized —due to the benefit he has caused—along with the pious good-doers.

May Allah reward amply our pious predecessors and early scholars, for they were for us a model in all good deeds, and an example for every virtue. O Allah, guide us to follow their path in all matters, and enable us to benefit from our lives and our times, to use them in what makes You pleased with us, and keep us away from excessiveness in all matters, You are indeed able to do all

things. And prayers and peace be upon our master Muḥammad and on his family and companions, and praise be to Allah Lord of the worlds.

Shaykh ʿAbd al-Fattāḥ Abū Ghuddah
Riyadh, Saudi Arabia
July 1982



THE VALUE OF TIME

This short title contains within it many different meanings and issues, all of which merit discussion. For the value given to time by philosophers is unlike that given to it by merchants, which is yet different from the value given to it by farmers, craftsmen, soldiers, politicians, young, old, and is yet valued differently by the students of knowledge and scholars.

I am only concerned—in this book—with the value of time to students and people of knowledge, in the hope that this will spur on the spirits of our young students of knowledge in these days, where the resolve of students has weakened, and the industrious students have become negligent, and where it has become rare to find a student burning with desire to acquire knowledge. Thus, genius qualities have disappeared and idleness and lethargy prevail, and failure and backwardness have become apparent in the ranks of the people of knowledge and the works that they produce.

The blessings and favours bestowed by Allah upon His slaves are infinite in number, and no human being is capable of enumerating nor understanding them, due to their number, permanence, ease, and the continuous manner in which Allah bestows them, and the different levels of appreciation that people have for them.

Truthful indeed is Allah, as He says, "But if you count the blessings of Allah, never will you be able to number them, man is indeed most unjust and most ungrateful."[1]

Blessings are Primary and Secondary

Blessings are divided into two different kinds: primary and secondary. Having an abundance of wealth and knowledge, a strong body, observance of the *nawāfil* [supererogatory acts of worship] such as waking up to pray at night, and reading the Qur'ān frequently, and following the *Sunnah* of the Prophet in bodily cleanliness, perfuming oneself—in the case of men—when attending a gathering and shaking hands with those you meet, entering the mosque with one's right foot and leaving it with the left, and removing harmful objects from paths and roads, as well as the many other actions performed by the Prophet which are recommended for us to emulate—all of these are examples of secondary blessings, but they are great in the eyes of those who know their true values.

Primary blessings are also numerous and infinite in number, the first of which is the belief in Allah the most Exalted and the Messengers and Books sent by Him, and implementing His commands and abiding by them. Other blessings include having a healthy body, eyes, ears and all other senses, which are the fulcrum for man's essence and the foundation from which he may go forth and benefit from his existence.

The blessing of knowledge is also a primary blessing that is essential for the advancement of humanity and its happiness in this life and the next, for knowledge is a lofty blessing whichever form it takes; seeking it is a blessing, benefiting from it and benefiting others by it is a blessing; preserving it and transmitting it to the following generations is a blessing, as is spreading it to people. There are many other examples of primary blessings, which I will not mention here out of respect for the value of time.

One of the primary blessings, or the loftiest and most precious of all primary blessings is that of time, for the discussion of which these pages have been assembled, particularly its value for students and people of knowledge. Time is the substance of life, the sphere in which man exists, the citadel of his spirit, and his subsistence—him benefiting himself and others. The Holy Qur'ān indicated the greatness of this most primary of all blessings, and stated its supremacy over all the other blessings in many verses, of which I will mention but a few. Allah, most Exalted is He, said of His greatest blessing bestowed upon mankind:

> *Allah is He who created the heavens and the earth and causes water to descend from the sky, thereby producing fruits as food for you, and makes the ships to be of service unto you that they may run upon the sea at His command, and has made of service unto you the rivers; and makes the sun and the moon constant in their courses, to be of service unto you, and has made of service unto you the night and the day; And He gives you of all you ask of Him; and if you count the favours of Allah, you will never number them. Man is indeed most unjust, most ungrateful.*[2]

Thus, Allah has granted His creation the blessings of day and night, which are the blessing of time that we elucidate, and in which we elucidate, and through which this world passes from its beginning to its end.

Allah, most Exalted is He, says illuminating this highest of blessings in a second verse: *And He has constrained the night and the day and the sun and the moon to be of service to you, and the stars are made subservient By His command. Surely in this there are signs for people who reflect.*[3] Thus Allah indicated at the end of the verse that in these blessings are indeed powerful signs for those who reflect and deliberate.

And He, the most Glorified, said:

> *And We appoint the night and the day as two signs. Then We make dark the sign of the night, and We make the sign of the day sight-giving, that you may seek bounty from your Lord, and that you may know the computation of the years, and the reckoning; and every thing have We expounded with a clear expounding.*[4]

And Allah the most Glorified said: *And of His signs are the night and the day and the sun and the moon. Prostrate yourselves neither to the moon nor to the sun; but prostrate to Allah Who created them, if it is in truth Him Whom you worship.*[5]

Allah extolled Himself as the Lord of time and space and whatever exists in them: "Unto Him belongs whatsoever rests in the night and the day. He is the Hearer, the Knower."[6]

Allah Reprimands Disbelievers for Wasting their Lives

Allah the most Exalted addressed the non-believers reprimanding them for wasting their lives, spending them in a state of disbelief, and not leaving their state of disbelief to a state of belief despite the blessings of long lives that Allah bestowed upon them, as He, the most Glorified, said: *Did We not grant you a life long enough for him who reflected to reflect therein? And the warner came to you? Now taste [the flavour of your deeds], for evil-doers have no helpers.*[7]

Hence, He, the most Glorified, has made the blessing of a long life a reason for one to reflect and ponder, and has made one's life as proof against him, as He has made messengers and warners proofs and witnesses over him as well. Ibn Kathīr said in his *tafsīr* [exegesis] of this noble verse: "It means: Did you not live in this life and have such long life spans that had you been of those who benefit from signs and who follow the truth you would have done so in your lives?" Qatāda said: "Know that the length of one's life is a proof against him, so we seek refuge in Allah from being mocked and blamed due to our long lives."

Al-Bukhārī narrated in his *Ṣaḥīḥ* on the authority of Abū Hurayra that the Prophet ﷺ said, "Allah will not accept the excuse of any person whose instant of death Allah had delayed till he is sixty years of age." *Imām* Aḥmad narrated in his Musnad on the authority of Abū Hurayra that the Prophet ﷺ said: "Whomsoever Allah grants a life span of sixty years, then He will not accept any excuses from him relating to the shortness of his life." Meaning

that Allah has removed any excuses he might cite and he will have no possible excuses, for Allah had granted him such a long lifetime.

Allah Vows by Time

There are many more verses that draw our attention to the greatness of this primary blessing, and it is sufficient for you to know that Allah, the most Glorified, has vowed by time in its different phases in many verses in His Noble Book, alerting us to the value of time, and advising us of its importance. Hence He, the most Exalted, vowed by the night, the day, the dawn, the morning, the sunset, the forenoon, the afternoon, such as His saying: *By the night enshrouding, and the day resplendent;*[8] and His saying: *And by the night when it withdraws, and the dawn when it shines forth;*[9] and His saying: *And the night when it departs, and by the dawn as it brightens;*[10] and His saying: *So I swear by the afterglow of sunset, and by the night and all that it enshrouds;*[11] and His saying, *By the dawn, and ten nights;*[12] and His saying: *By the morning hours, and the night when it is stillest;*[13] and His saying: *By time, verily man is in loss.*[14]

It is noteworthy that all matters for which Allah vows by time are of the utmost importance, and that He vowed by time in two very important matters, that is the reassurance of the Prophet ﷺ that he had not been abandoned by Allah as claimed by the polytheists, and in asserting that all mankind is in loss except those who believe and do righteous deeds. Allah said vowing by time: *By the glorious morning light, and by the night when it is still, your Lord has not forsaken you, nor is He displeased.*[15]

He also said: *By [the token of] Time [through the ages], Verily man is in loss, Except such as have faith, and do righteous deeds, and [join together] in the mutual teaching of truth, and of patience and constancy.*[16]

Imām Fakhr al-Rāzī's Commentary on the Value of Time

Imām Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, may Allah the Exalted have mercy on him, said in his *tafsīr* of Sūrat al-ʿ*Aṣr*:

> Allah vowed by ʿ*Asr*—which is time—because of its wonders, for within it good and bad matters occur, health and illness, richness and poverty, and because its value and preciousness cannot be measured against anything else. For if you wasted a thousand years in useless things, then repented and achieved happiness in the last instant of your life, you would dwell in Paradise for eternity, and you would know that the most precious thing in your life is that instant. Thus time is one of the fundamental blessings, hence Allah vowed by it, and He, the Exalted, stressed that night and day are opportunities wasted by Man! And that time is more honoured than space since time is a pure blessing with no defect except that the loser to be blamed is man.

That was some of what was written in that noble book about the value of time and how it is one of the fundamental and most important of blessings.

The Value of Time in the Sunnah

As for the blessed *Sunnah*, clarification of this fact is even clearer and more explicit. Al-Bukhārī, al-Tirmidhī, and Ibn Mājah narrated, on the authority of Ibn ʿAbbās, may Allah be pleased with both of them, that the Prophet ﷺ said: "There are two blessings which many people lose: Health and free time for doing good."

Time is a precious blessing and a great gift, the value of which is only realised and benefited from by the successful guided ones, as indicated by the noble *ḥadīth*, "which many people lose," implying that only a minority benefit from it, while the majority are wasters and losers.

Protectiveness of Time by the Worshipper and the Wise

Imām Ibn al-Qayyim, may Allah the Exalted have mercy on him, said in his book *Madārij al-Sālikīn*, writing on the station of *ghīrah*

[protectiveness] and its comprising several aspects, mentioned *ghīrah* over time saying:

> *Ghīrah* [regret] over any time that has passed! And it is a deadly regret, for time passes fleetingly, and is difficult to hold on to, slow to regain. Time for the worshipper is the time for worship and litanies, and for the *murīd* (spiritual seeker) is time for drawing close to Allah and devoting his heart completely to Him. Time is the dearest thing to him; he fears that it may pass without him achieving his desire! If time passes him, he can never get it back, for the time that follows it has its own accompanying obligations and opportunities, such that when one time is lost there is no way to regain it.

A "deadly regret" means that its effect is akin to the pain of being killed, because the regret of hearts is deadly, particularly when one is certain there is no way to regain what was lost. Also, regret over loss is another loss, as it is said: busying oneself with regret over time lost in the past is wasting the present time! Hence it is said: Time is like a sword, if you do not slay it, it slays you.

Time passes naturally, ends automatically, so whoever is not aware of his soul, his time will be lost, his loss will be great, and his regrets will be severe. How will he feel when he realises, when his loss becomes certain, the magnitude of what he has lost? And when he seeks going back and finds it impossible to regain what he has lost? For how can yesterday be returned in a new day?! *But then there will be no escape [for them], and they will be seized from a position [quite] near. And they will say, "We do believe [now] in the [Truth]"; but how could they receive [faith] from a position [so far off].*[17] And when he is deprived of what he wishes and desires, and becomes certain that what he had purchased was not fit to be purchased by a rational person, *and there will be a barrier between him and that which he desires.*[18]

What regrets! To the return to the like of which there is no way. And had their return been possible the regret would have been bearable!

Events are short-lasting, they pass like the passing of clouds, and time with what is within it passes, and all that remains is its effect. Hence choose for yourself what will remain with you of your time, for the effect will surely remain, and thus to the happy ones it will be said in Paradise: *Eat and drink to your heart's content because of what you did in days gone by.*[19] And it will be said to the wretched ones in the Hellfire: *[You have met this fate] because you exulted in the earth without right and because you were insolent.*[20]

All Benefits Derive from Time, Thus Whoever Loses it Can Never Regain It

Imām Ibn al-Qayyim also said, in his book *al-Jawāb al-Kāfī li Man Sa'ala ʿAni al-Dawā' al-Shāfī* [*The Satisfactory Answer to the One who Asked Regarding the Curing Medicine*]:

> The highest, noblest and most beneficial of thoughts are those that are for Allah and the Hereafter. What is for Allah is of many types … the fifth kind is reflecting on the obligation of using time and its function, and gathering all of one's resolve for that purpose alone. For the intelligent one is the one who is conscious of his time, and if he loses it then he would have lost all his interests, for all interests derive from time, and whenever time is lost it can never be regained!

Al-Shāfiʿī, may Allah be pleased with him, said: "I accompanied the Sufis and I only benefited from two of their sayings. First, 'Time is a sword; if you do not slay it, it will slay you.' And the second: 'Keep your soul occupied with good, otherwise it will keep you occupied with evil.'"

One's time is in fact one's life, and the substance of one's eternal life in lasting pleasure or of a life of suffering in severe torment. It passes faster than the passing of clouds, and the portion of one's time that was for Allah and with Allah is part of one's life, while the rest is not counted as part of one's life even if one lived long, for one was living the life of animals. For the one who spends his time in negligence, desires and false wishes, and spends

most of his time in sleeping and idleness, then the death of such a person is better for him than his life. And if one has of one's prayer only that part in which one was conscious, as in the *ḥadīth*, then similarly what counts of one's life for one is only that which was spent for Allah and with Allah.

The Salaf's Keenness to Gain Time and Fill it with Goodness

The pious predecessors and those successors who followed their way were the keenest of people to gain time and to fill it with good deeds, whether they were scholars or worshippers, for they raced against the hours, and used every instant, being very careful with their time, so that they may not lose any part of it.

Hold the Sun So I Can Talk to You

It was narrated about ʿĀmir ibn ʿAbd Qays, one of the ascetic Tābiʿīn, that a man said to him: "Talk to me." ʿĀmir ibn ʿAbd Qays replied: "Hold the Sun." What he meant was, "Stop for me the sun or prevent it from continuing its movement so that I can talk to you." For time is ever moving, and does not return once it has passed, such that its loss is an irreplaceable loss that cannot be regained, for each time has its own actions to fill it.

Ibn Masʿūd's Regret Over a Day that Passes of His Life

The eminent companion ʿAbdullāh ibn Masʿūd, may Allah be pleased with him, said: "I have never regretted anything as much as my regret over a day on which the sun sets and my life span decreases while my good deeds have not increased."

Night and Day are Ever Working on You, Thus Work in Them

The pious caliph ʿUmar ibn ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz, may Allah be pleased with him, said: "Night and day are ever working on you, thus work in them."

O Son of Adam, You are But Days!

Al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, may Allah be pleased with him, said: "O Son of Adam, you are but days, such that with every day that goes by, part of you departs with it." He also said: "I have seen people who were more protective of their time than you are of your *dirhams* and *dīnārs*" [denominations of money].

Ḥammād ibn Salamah was Either Narrating, Reading, Glorifying Allah, or Praying

Al-Ḥāfiẓ al-Dhahabī said in *Tadhkirat al-Ḥuffāẓ*, in the biography of *al-Imām* al-Muḥaddith Ḥammād ibn Salamah al-Baṣrī, al-Bazzāz al-Khiraqī: "The *Imām*, scholar of *ḥadīth* and Philology *Shaykh* al-Islām, was born in 91 AH, and died in 167 AH. He was the first to classify the sciences with Ibn Abī ᶜArūbah, and was very proficient in Arabic, articulate and eloquent, a strict follower of the *Sunnah*, and was a pious worshipper."

His student ᶜAbdur-Raḥmān ibn Mahdī said: "If it was said to Ḥammād ibn Salamah: 'You shall die tomorrow,' he would not be able to increase his good deeds." Mūsā ibn Ismāᶜīl al-Tabūdhakī said: "If I told you that I have never seen Ḥammād ibn Salamah laughing, I would be telling the truth. He was always busy, either narrating the *ḥadīth*, or reading, or glorifying (Allah), or praying, and he divided his day between them." Yūnus al-Mu'addib said: "Ḥammād ibn Salamah died while in prayer, may Allah have mercy on him."

The Most Burdensome Time for al-Khalīl ibn Aḥmad is His Mealtime

Abū Hilāl al-ᶜAskarī said in his book *al-Ḥaththu ᶜalā Ṭalabi al-ᶜIlm wa'l-Ijtihādi fī Jamᶜih* [*Encouraging the Seeking of Knowledge and Compiling It*]: "Al-Khalīl ibn Aḥmad al-Farāhīdī al-Baṣrī, one of the world's prominent intellectuals, born in the year 100 AH and

died in 170 AH, may Allah have mercy on him, used to say: 'The most burdensome time for me is when I must eat.'" It is indeed amazing to what degree he was devoted to knowledge! And how precious his time was to him!

Abū Yūsuf Discussing a Matter of Fiqh on His Death Bed

Here we see the judge and *Imām* Abū Yūsuf (Yaʿqūb ibn Ibrāhīm al-Anṣārī al-Kūfī, later al-Baghdādī), born in 113 AH, died 182 AH, may Allah have mercy on him), the companion of Abū Ḥanīfah, and his student who spread his knowledge and *madhhab*, the judge of the three ʿAbbāsid rulers: al-Mahdī, al-Hādī and al-Rashīd, the first to be called Qāḍī al-Quḍāt (the Supreme Judge), and also known as the Supreme Judge of the world's judges: we see him, on his death bed, during his last moments in this life, discussing a matter of *fiqh* with some of his visitors, in order to benefit and teach, and not wishing to lose the last moment of his life without making use of it in benefiting himself and being beneficial to others. His student al-Qāḍī Ibrāhīm ibn al-Jarrāḥ al-Kūfī, later al-Miṣrī, said:

> Abū Yūsuf became ill, so I went to visit him, and found him unconscious. When he regained consciousness he said to me: "O Ibrāhīm, what is your opinion on this matter?" I said to him: "While you are in this state?" He said: "That is fine, let us discuss it, perhaps one may be saved by it." Then he said: "O Ibrāhīm, which is better in the casting of stones [during pilgrimage], to do so while walking or while mounted?" I said: "Mounted." He said: "Wrong." I said: "Walking." He said: "Wrong." I said: "Say your opinion, may Allah be pleased with you." He said: "As for the case where one stops where one should make supplication, then it is better to do so while walking, but if it is elsewhere then it is better while mounted." Then I left him, and as soon as I reached the door of his house, I heard crying, and he died, may Allah have mercy on him.[21]

This is indeed the way of the scholars and *imāms*, for they say:

"Seek knowledge from the cradle to the grave."[22]

Abū Yūsuf's Son Dies, So He Delegates Someone to Wash Him and Bury Him in Order to Attend His Circle

The great *Imām* Abū Yūsuf al-Qāḍī al-Almaʿī was a close companion of his *shaykh Imām* Abū Ḥanīfah, attending his study circle for 17 years (or, as some say, 29 years), never missing the *Ẓuhr* Prayer with him nor leaving him except due to illness. Muḥammad ibn Qudāmah narrated that Shujāʿ ibn Makhlad once heard Abū Yūsuf state: "A son of mine died, and I did not attend his washing or burial, and left my neighbours and relatives in charge of that, lest I should miss some part of Abū Ḥanīfah's lecture and regret it for the rest of my life."[23]

Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan Sleeps but Little of the Night

Al-ʿAllāmah Ṭashkobri Zādeh said *in Miftāḥ al-Saʿādah wa Miṣbāh al-Siyādah* [*The Key to Happiness and the Lamp of Dominance*]:

> Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan al-Shaybānī al-Kūfī al-Baghdādī, the *Imām* of *fiqh* and *ḥadīth* and the Mujtahid, the student of *Imām* Abū Ḥanīfah, born 132 AH, died 189 AH, may Allah have mercy on him, did not sleep at night. He used to have several books, and whenever he became bored of reading one, he would turn to read another, and used to get rid of sleepiness by using cold water and would say: Sleep is indeed caused by heat.

ʿIṣām al-Balakhī Buys a Pen for One Dīnār

Then the scholar Ṭashkobri Zādeh said: "And ʿIṣām ibn Yūsuf al-Balakhī, the Ḥanafī scholar of *fiqh* and *ḥadīth*, who died in 215 AH, may Allah have mercy on him, bought a pen for one Dīnār in order to write what he heard immediately. For life is short, and knowledge is vast, hence the student must not waste time, and must make use of nights and solitary times, and must seek scholars and benefit from them, for not everything that is missed

can be regained!"

> And I will not regain what I have missed
> Through "Had I," "I wish" or "If only"!

Muḥammad ibn Salām al-Bīkandī Calling: "One Pen for One Dīnār!"

We see Muḥammad ibn Salām al-Bīkandī the *shaykh* of *Imām* al-Bukhārī, who died in 227 AH, as a young student sitting in a circle of knowledge, where his *Shaykh* was narrating and dictating. The pen of Muḥammad ibn Salām broke, so he ordered someone to call: A pen for one *Dīnār* [which was a great sum at the time], and pens flooded towards him. (Narrated by al-Ḥāfiẓ al-ʿAynī in *ʿUmdat al-Qārī*.) His generosity was motivated by his knowledge of the value of that precious time and also the value of that which fills it. Here is a scholar seeking knowledge who realised the value of time, and hence sacrificed his money for a pen.

ʿUbayd ibn Yaʿīsh Fed by His Sister for 30 Years so that He May Write the Ḥadīth

Al-Ḥāfiẓ al-Dhahabī narrates in *Siyar Aʿlām al-Nubalā'* [*Biographies of the Prominent Nobles*] in the biography of the great scholar of *ḥadīth* ʿUbayd Bin Yaʿīsh the *shaykh* of al-Bukhārī and Muslim, the following: "He is the great scholar of *ḥadīth*, Abū Muhammad ʿUbayd Bin Yaʿīsh al-Kūfī al-Mahāmilī al-ʿAṭṭār. Al-Bukhārī narrated on his authority concerning the raising of the hands, and Muslim in the *Ṣaḥīḥ*, and al-Nasā'ī, Abū Zarʿah, al-Rāzī, Muḥammad ibn Ayyūb al-Bajalī… and many others. ʿAmmār ibn Rajā' said: "I heard ʿUbayd ibn Yaʿīsh saying: For thirty years I never had time to eat at night, my sister used to feed me while I wrote *ḥadīth*."

Ibn Maʿīn Says to His Shaykh: Dictate It to Me Now Lest I Do Not Meet You Again

Imām Aḥmad and *Imām* Abū ʿĪsa al-Tirmidhī narrated the following, and the version included here is that of al-Tirmidhī:

> ʿAbd ibn Ḥumayd narrated to us, and said Muḥammad ibn al-Fadl said that Ḥammād ibn Salamah narrated on the authority of Ḥabīb ibn al-Shahīd, on the authority of al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, on the authority of Anas ibn Mālik, may Allah be pleased with him, that the Prophet ﷺ came out of his house—during his last illness—leaning on Usāmah ibn Zayd, wearing a Qatarī cloak which he wrapped himself in, and he led them in Prayer.

Then al-Tirmidhī said after narrating this *ḥadīth*:

> ʿAbd ibn Ḥumayd [the *shaykh* of al-Tirmidhī] said that Muḥammad ibn al-Fadl said: "Yaḥyā ibn Maʿīn asked me regarding this *ḥadīth* when he first attended my circle. I said: 'Ḥammād ibn Salamah narrated it.' So he said: 'Could you dictate from your book?' I began to get my book out, but he held me from my clothes and asked: 'Dictate it to me from memory, I fear that I may not meet you again.' So I dictated it to him, then got my book out and read it to him."

The Scolarship of Yaḥyā ibn Maʿīn in Ḥadīth

In order to understand better this narration, I would like to mention part of the biography of *Imām* Yaḥyā ibn Maʿīn. *Al-Ḥāfiẓ* al-Dhahabī said in *Siyar Aʿlām al-Nubalā'* about him: "He is the great *Imām* and scholar, the master of Ḥuffāẓ [memorisers of the *ḥadīth*], the king of Ḥuffāẓ, the *shaykh* of the scholars of *ḥadīth*, Abū Zakariyyā, Yaḥyā ibn Maʿīn ibn ʿAwn ibn Ziyād ibn Bistām. He was not from the Arabs, but became allied with some of Banī Murr, and came to be known as al-Murrī, and al-Baghdādī by birth, one of the most prominent scholars of *ḥadīth*. He was born in Baghdād in 158 AH, and grew up there. He started writing *ḥadīth* at the age of ten. His father Maʿīn was one of the noble scribes under ʿAbdullāh ibn Mālik in charge of the water tax, and

left him 1,000,000 Dirhams, all of which he spent on acquiring knowledge of *ḥadīth* until he did not even have sandals to wear!

He heard *ḥadīth* from ʿAbdullāh ibn al-Mubārak, Hushaim ibn Bashīr, Ismāʿīl ibn ʿAyyāsh, Sufyān ibn ʿUyaynah, ʿAbdur-Razzāq al-Sanʿānī from Yemen, Wakīʿ ibn al-Jarḥ, Yaḥyā ibn Saʿīd al-Qattān, ʿAbdur-Rahmān ibn Mahdī, and many others, in Iraq, Shām, the Arabian Peninsula, Egypt and al-Ḥijāz.

On his authority, *Imāms* Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, al-Bukhārī, Muslim, Abū Dāwūd, ʿAbbās al-Dūrī al-Baghdādī—the narrator of his teachings—Abū Zarʿah al-Rāzī, ʿUthmān ibn Saʿīd al-Dārimī, Abū Yaʿla al-Mawṣilī, and many others who cannot be enumerated, narrated.

Ibn Maʿīn Wrote a Million Ḥadīth by Hand, and Wrote Each Ḥadīth 50 Times

ʿAlī ibn al-Madīnī said that everyone's knowledge went to Yaḥyā ibn Maʿīn. ʿAbd al-Khāliq ibn Manṣūr said:

> I said to ʿAbdullāh ibn al-Rūmī that I heard some students of *ḥadīth* narrating some *ḥadīth*s on the authority of Yaḥyā ibn Maʿīn and saying: "It was narrated to me by the best of narrators to have ever existed." Ibn al-Rūmī said: "Why should you be surprised? I heard ʿAlī ibn al-Madīnī say: 'I saw no one like him, and I do not know any man who wrote as much of the *ḥadīth* as what Yaḥyā ibn Maʿīn wrote.'"

Muḥammad ibn Naṣr al-Marwazī said: "I heard Yaḥyā ibn Maʿīn say: 'I wrote by hand 1,000,000 *ḥadīth*.'"[24] Al-Dhahabī said that he meant including repetitions, for he said: "Had we not written a *ḥadīth* 50 times we would not have learnt it."

Any Ḥadīth Unknown to Ibn Maʿīn is Not a Ḥadīth

Imām Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal said: "Any *ḥadīth* that is unknown to Yaḥyā ibn Maʿīn is not a *ḥadīth*. Yaḥyā ibn Maʿīn is a man created by Allah for this purpose, to reveal the lies of the liars [regard-

ing *ḥadīth*]." Abū Ḥātim al-Rāzī said: "If you see an inhabitant of Baghdad loving Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, then know that he follows the *Sunnah*, and if you see that he dislikes Yaḥyā ibn Maʿīn, then know that he is a liar."

Ibn Maʿīn's Saying: If You Write, Collect What You Write, and If You Narrate, Search

Yaḥyā ibn Maʿīn is the one who set a great methodology in seeking and spreading knowledge. He made the statement which became the rule of all scholars of *ḥadīth* in seeking knowledge and narrating: "When you write, collect [everything you hear], and when you narrate, search and investigate."

The Magnitude of the Books of Yaḥyā Ibn Maʿīn

Sālih ibn Aḥmad *al-Ḥāfiẓ* said that he heard Abū ʿAbdullāh say: "I heard my father say that Yaḥyā ibn Maʿīn left behind 114 containers of books, and four *ḥibābs* [large containers] full of books."

Ibn Maʿīn, the One who Rejected Lies About the Prophet

Whenever Yaḥyā ibn Maʿīn went on Ḥajj, he used to go to Makkah via Madīnah, and on his way back from Makkah he would return via Madīnah. When he went to Ḥajj in 233 AH, he entered Madīnah before Ḥajj at the end of the month of Dhū'l-Qiʿdah, and fell ill, and died seven days before the end of the month. People heard of his arrival and his death, and the tribe of Banū Hāshim brought out the bed on which the Prophet ﷺ was washed, and used it to prepare him for burial. People attended his funeral prayer and buried him in al-Baqīʿ (where the Prophet and prominent companions are buried), and the people said: "Here is the man who used to defend the Prophet of Allah from lies fabricated about him."

Commentary on the Story of Ibn Maʿīn with His Shaykh Muhammad Ibn al-Faḍl

There are many precious lessons and dear benefits from the *ḥadīth* received by Yaḥyā ibn Maʿīn from his *shaykh* Muḥammad ibn al-Faḍl. Yaḥyā ibn Maʿīn, some of whose biography we have seen, asked his *shaykh* Muḥammad ibn al-Faḍl al-Sadūsī al-Baṣrī to narrate the *ḥadīth* to him as soon as he sat with him, and when he began to narrate starting with: "Ḥammād ibn Salamah narrated to us," Yaḥyā said: "If possible from your book, please." Yaḥyā did so only for further clarification and certainty, for Muḥammad ibn al-Faḍl is a trustworthy and competent scholar of *ḥadīth*, but Yaḥyā only wished for further certainty.

It was in the tradition of the scholars of *ḥadīth* before the establishment of schools and universities in the fifth century that the *shaykh* would teach his students in the mosque, or in any spacious place if the mosque was not sufficiently spacious for the students, or in front of his house if their number was small. Muḥammad ibn al-Faḍl was narrating this *ḥadīth* to Yaḥyā ibn Maʿīn in front of his house. When Muḥammad ibn al-Faḍl got up to enter his house and fetch his book to narrate from it, Yaḥyā feared that Muḥammad ibn al-Faḍl may be prevented by something during that short time between his getting up to fetch his book from his house and his return, and that he might not hear the *ḥadīth*. So he held on to him before he finished getting up and prevented him from going to his house until he narrated the *ḥadīth* to him from his memory, out of his great desire to hear the *ḥadīth* and his fear that something may prevent him from doing so. Hence he asked him: Please dictate it from memory, for I fear I may not see you again, for life has its interruptors, and I fear something may arise and prevent our meeting. Muḥammad ibn al-Faḍl then dictated the *ḥadīth* to him from his memory first, then entered his house, collected his book and read the *ḥadīth* from it a second time.

This story illustrated *Imām* Yaḥyā ibn Maʿīn's appreciation of

the value of time and his great desire to seek knowledge and attain certainty, his racing to benefit, his avoidance of delaying the opportunity to learn and benefit, and his fear of any sudden interruption of life.[25]

Through this short story, we can see how *Imām* Yaḥyā ibn Maʿīn valued and gained time, and we can understand how he was able to write a million *ḥadīth* by hand, and to travel around many countries, to learn from scholars and narrate what he learnt to thousands of scholars and students.

Imām Yaḥyā ibn Maʿīn is not unique in this regard, and one can say the same of *Imāms* ʿAlī ibn al-Madīnī, Aḥamd ibn Ḥanbal, al-Bukhārī, Muslim, Abū Dāwūd, al-Tirmidhī, al-Nasā'ī and others like them.

The Cherishing of Knowledge by al-Jāḥiẓ, al-Fatḥ ibn Khāqān and Ismāʿīl al-Qāḍī

Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī narrated in his book *Taqyīd al-ʿIlm*, on the authority of Abū'l-ʿAbbās al-Mubarrid:

> I have not seen anyone who valued knowledge more than these three: al-Jāḥiẓ, ʿAmr ibn Baḥr, the *imām* of the men of letters, born in 163 AH, died in 255 AH; al-Fatḥ ibn Khāqān, the genius writer and poet, one of the nobles, chosen by the ʿAbbāsid Caliph al-Mutawakkil as a minister and companion, who had a library containing the most sought-after books, who died in 237 AH; and Ismāʿīl al-Qāḍī, the Mālikī *imām* and scholar of *fiqh* of Baghdād, born in 200 AH, died 282 AH.
>
> As for al-Jāḥiẓ, whenever he found a book he would read it from cover to cover, whatever book it may be, to the extent that he used to rent the shops of the paper sellers and spend the night there in order to read the books they stored.
>
> And as for al-Fatḥ ibn Khāqān, he used to carry a book in his sleeve or shoe, and whenever he would leave al-Mutawakkil to go to the bathroom or for prayer, he would take the book out and read while walking until arriving at his destination, and the

same on the way back, until arriving at his seat. Whenever al-Mutawakkil left for any need, he would bring the book out and read until the return of al-Mutawakkil.

As for Ismāʿīl ibn Isḥāq al-Qāḍī, I have never seen him without finding him with a book in his hand, or looking through books searching for one to read, or dusting the books.

The Servant of Ibn Suḥnūn Feeds Him Dinner But He Does Not Notice Because of His Engagement in Writing

Al-Qāḍī ʿIyāḍ in his *Tartīb al-Madārik* wrote in the biography of the Mālikī scholar of *fiqh* and *ḥadīth* Muḥammad ibn Suḥūn of Qayrawān, born 202 AH, died 256 AH, may Allah have mercy on him:

> Al-Mālikī said: "Muḥammad ibn Suḥnūn had a servant called Umm Mudām. Once he was in her house, and he was busy writing a book until the evening. When it was time for dinner, she asked permission to serve dinner, but he replied: 'I am busy at the moment.' After waiting for a very long time, she started feeding him his dinner until he finished eating, while he continued working. He then continued to write until the time of the call for Dawn Prayer. He then said: 'Last night I was too busy with my work, O Umm Mudām! Bring that which you have.' She replied: 'By Allah, I fed it to you.' He said: 'I did not notice!'"

Philologist Thaʿlab Accepts an Invitation on The Condition That He Finishes Reading His Book

Abū Hilāl al-ʿAskarī said in his book *al-Ḥaththu ʿalā Ṭalab al-ʿIlm wa'l-Ijtihād fī Jamʿih*:

> It was related concerning Thaʿlab- Aḥmad ibn Yaḥyā as-Shaybānī of Kūfā and Baghdād, one of the leading scholars of philology, linguistics, literature, *ḥadīth* and *qirā'āt*, born in 200 AH, died 291 AH—may Allah have mercy on him—that he always had a book he was reading. Whenever he received an invitation, he would ask for a leather carpet on which he would sit and read.

Tha'lab Dies After Being Run Over by an Animal While Reading

[According to Khallikān], the cause of Tha'lab's death was that he left the mosque on Friday after *'Asr* Prayer, and he had hearing difficulties. He had a book in his hand that he was reading while walking. He was hit by a horse which pushed him into a hole. He was carried home in that state, suffering from severe head pains, and died the following day, may Allah have mercy on him.[26]

Ibn Jarīr's Valuing of His Time and His Determination to Write a Tafsīr in 30,000 Pages

Imām Ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, the *imām* of the scholars of *tafsīr*, *ḥadīth* and history, the great Mujtahid, may Allah have mercy on him, was a sign from among the signs in his beneficial use of his time and gaining it and filling it with learning, teaching and writing, whose works were truly amazing, not only in their number, but also in their perfection and creativity.

The following excerpts about the life of this great scholar, *Imām* Ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, are taken from the 56-page biography written by the scholar Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī in his book *Mu'jam al-Udabā'*, and from what the scholar of *ḥadīth* al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī wrote in *The History of Baghdād*:

> The philologist 'Alī ibn 'Ubayd-Allah as-Simsimī narrated, on the authority of Abū 'Umar 'Ubayd-Allah ibn Aḥmad as-Simsār, and Abū'l-Qāsim ibn 'Uqayl al-Warrāq, that Abū Ja'far al-Ṭabarī said to his companions: "What would you think of the writing of a *tafsīr* of the Qur'ān?" They said: "How long will it be?" He said: "Thirty thousand pages." They said: "Lives would end before its completion!" So he restricted it to around three thousand pages and dictated it in seven years, from 283–290 AH. Then he said to them: "What would you think of the writing of a book on the history of the world from the time of Adam to our time?" They said: "How long will it be?" He said: "Thirty thousand pages." They gave him the same reply. He said regretfully: "We are Allah's and to Him we shall return! Resolves have died!" He

reduced it to the same length as the *tafsīr*, and completed editing it on Wednesday, three days before the end of the Month of Rabīʿ al-Ākhir in the year 303 AH.

Ibn Jarīr Wrote Forty Pages Every Day

Al-Khaṭīb said: "I heard al-Simsimī relate that Ibn Jarīr spent forty years in which he wrote forty pages every day." His student Abū Muḥammad ʿAbdullāh ibn Aḥmad ibn Jaʿfar al-Farghanī wrote in his book known as *al-Ṣilāh*, a book which he linked to *The History of Ibn Jarīr*: "Some students of Ibn Jarīr's counted the total number of days he had lived, from his birth to his death at the age of eighty-six, and divided the number of pages of his writings by those days, which came to fourteen pages every day, which is only possible for a man with the help and blessing of the Creator."

The Total of Ibn Jarīr's Writings is 358,000 Pages

Ibn Jarīr was born in 224 AH, and died in 310 AH, and if we subtract the period before maturity estimated to be fourteen years, it would leave Ibn Jarīr seventy-two years in which he wrote fourteen pages every day. And if we count the days in those seventy-two years and multiplied them by the fourteen pages written daily, the total written by *Imām* Ibn Jarīr would be around 358 thousand pages.

His [books on] history and *tafsīr* [Qur'ān exegesis] were each around three thousand pages long, making them together total around seven thousand. His "History" was printed in eleven large volumes, and his *tafsīr* in thirty large volumes. If you consider the rest of his writings, 351 thousand pages, you would realise the extent of the writings of this *imām*, who was like an encyclopedia in his knowledge, like a publishing house in his writing, while he was but an individual, writing with his own pen on paper, and spreading his knowledge and thought to the people as purified sweet honey, and that would not have been possible were it not

for the fact that he used his time beneficially and knew how to manage it and use it effectively.

Ibn Jarīr's Time Management

The judge Abū Bakr ibn Kāmil-Aḥmad ibn Kāmil al-Shajarī, the student and companion of Ibn Jarīr, said, describing how he, may Allah have mercy on him, ordered his times and activities:

> After eating, he used to sleep in a short-sleeved shirt, rubbed with sandalwood and rosewater. Then he would get up to pray *Ẓuhr* at home, and would write until *ʿAṣr* time, and would go out to pray *ʿAṣr*, then would sit teaching the people and correcting them until *Maghrib*. Then he would sit to teach *fiqh* until the last *ʿIshā* prayer, then he would go home. He used to divide his day and night between his personal interests, his religion, and people, as guided by Allah, High and Glorified be He.

Ibn Jarīr Makes a Note a Little Before His Death

Ustādh Muḥammad Kurdalī wrote in his book *Kunūz al-Ajdād* (*Treasures of the Forefathers*) on the biography of *Imām* Ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī: "He was not known for having wasted even a minute of his life except in benefiting or giving benefit." Ibn Zakariyyā narrated on the authority of some trustworthy narrators that he was in the presence of Abū Jaʿfar al-Ṭabarī, may Allah have mercy on him, before his death, an hour or less after which he died, when he heard this *duʿā'* on the authority of Jaʿfar ibn Muḥammad. He asked for ink and paper and wrote it down. He was asked: "In the state you are in?" He replied: "One must not leave seeking knowledge until death." May Allah have mercy on him and reward him for the benefit he has brought to Islam and the Muslims.

Ibn Jarīr's Lasting Legacy Through His Writings

This was a quick glance at the writings of *Imām* Ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, may Allah have mercy on him, without enumerating and men-

tioning all of their titles and topics, some of which have survived to this day. These are an eternal reminder of him more so than any number of sons or grandsons could ever be, for they would eventually disappear into the past and be forgotten, while these writings remain a lasting legacy, after 1,100 years of his death. *Imām* Ibn al-Jawzī was right when he said: "The scholar's book is his eternal child."

Philologist Ibn al-Khayyāṭ Fell into a Hole as He was Reading While Walking

Abū Hilāl al-ʿAskarī said in His Book *al-Haththu ʿalā Ṭalabi al-ʿIlmi wa'l-Ijtihādi fi Jamʿih*: "The philologist Abū Bakr ibn al-Khayyāṭ-*Imām* Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad ibn Manṣūr from Samarkand who lived in Baghdād, died 320 AH, used to study at all times, even while walking in the street, and many times was hit by horses and knocked into ditches!"

Al-Ḥākim al-Shahīd Does Not Speak to His Visitors Due to Preoccupation With Writing

In al-Samʿānī's *al-Ansāb*, he wrote on the biography of al-Ḥākim al-Shahīd Abū al-Fadl Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad ibn al-Marwazī al-Balkhī, the Ḥanafī scholar and judge, who died as a martyr in 334 AH, may Allah have mercy on him, the scholar of Marw and the greatest Ḥanafī *Imām* of his time:

> Abū ʿAbdullāh ibn al-Ḥākim al-Shahīd said: "I have observed al-Ḥākim fasting every Monday and Thursday, not missing the night prayer whether traveling or residing. He used to sit with his inkpot and books, when he was the Sultan's minister, and would only grant permission to those he could not refuse entry, and would continue his writing until the visitor left. Abū'l-ʿAbbās ibn Ḥammuyah complained of him, and said: 'We go to visit him, but he does not speak to us, he holds his pen and leaves us!'"

Al-Ḥākim Abū ʿAbdullāh author of *al-Mustadrak* said:

> I attended on a Friday afternoon the lesson of al-Ḥākim Abū'l-Fadl. Prince Abū ʿAlī ibn Bakr ibn al-Muẓaffar entered, so he stood up for him and did not move from his place, and sent him away saying: "Go, O prince, for this is not your day!"

The Numerous Writings of Ḥadīth Scholar Ibn Shāhīn

Al-Dhahabī wrote in *Tadhkirat al-Ḥuffāẓ* in the biography of scholar Ibn Shāhīn, born 297 AH, died 385 AH at the age of 88, may Allah have mercy on him:

> He is the great *imām*, the scholar of *ḥadīth* of Iraq, Abū Ḥafṣ ʿUmar ibn ʿUthmān al-Baghdādī, known as Ibn Shāhīn, the writer of many books. His student Abū'l-Ḥusayn ibn al-Muhtadī Billah said: "Ibn Shāhīn said to us: 'I wrote 330 books, including *al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr*, a thousand volumes, *al-Musnad* 1,300 volumes, *al-Tārīkh* 150 volumes and *al-Zuhd* of 100 volumes.'"[27]

Ibn Shāhīn Spends Seven Hundred Dirhams on Ink

Muḥammad ibn ʿUmar ad-Dāwūdī al-Qāḍī said that he heard Ibn Shāhīn say: "I counted the price of the ink I have bought to this day, and it amounted to seven hundred dirhams." Ibn al-Fawāris said: "Ibn Shāhīn wrote more books than anyone ever did."

Philologist Mundhir al-Marwānī Known as "Study"

One of the scholars of the Arabic language became known as *al-mudhākarah*—study—because of his great attachment to the study of the sciences of the Arabic language with any scholar he met. *Al-Ḥāfiẓ* ibn Ḥajar said in *Nuzhat al-Albāb fī'l-al-Alqāb*: "*Al-Mudhākarah* is al-Mundhir ibn ʿAbd-ir-Raḥmān ibn Muʿāwiyah ibn Muḥammad ibn al-Mundhir ibn ʿAbd-ir-Raḥmān ibn Muʿāwiyah ibn Hishām ibn ʿAbd al-Malik, the Andalūsī, the Marwānī. He was known by that name because he was fond of the science of grammar and was a scholar of the Arabic language. Whenever he met any of his companions, he would say: 'Would

you like to do some *mudhākarah*-study and revision of Arabic?' Thus he became known as *al-Mudhākarah*. He was mentioned by Ibn Ḥazm who wrote that he died in 393 AH.

Abū Nuʿaym al-Aṣfahānī Teaching While Walking

Al-Ḥāfiẓ al-Dhahabī wrote in *Tadhkirat al-Ḥuffāẓ* in the biography of *al-Ḥāfiẓ* Abū Nuʿaym al-Aṣfahānī Aḥmad ibn ʿAbdullāh, the scholar of *ḥadīth*, history and Sufism, born 336 AH, died 430 AH, may Allah have mercy on him:

> Aḥmad ibn Marduwayh said: "Abū Nuʿaym was at his time a scholar sought by all seekers of knowledge. There was no one who had more knowledge of the *ḥadīth* and of chains of narrations than him. All scholars of *ḥadīth* used to travel to meet him, each of them being allocated a day on which he would read to him (for verification) until the time of *Ẓuhr*, and when he would leave to go to his house, some would also read to him on the way, and he was never tired of teaching. He had no food other than teaching and writing."

Al-Bayrūnī Learns a Point of Fiqh While on His Deathbed

In *Muʿjam al-Udabā'* of Yāqūt al-□amawī, it was written in the biography of the great *imām*, the astronomer, mathematician, historian, philologist, the scholar of many disciplines, Abū al-Rayḥān al-Bayrūnī, Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Khawārizmī, born 362 AH, died 440 AH, may Allah have mercy on him:

> Abū al-Rayḥān was bent on seeking knowledge of all sciences, devoted to the writing of books, addressing all sides and details of the matter, his pen seldom leaving his hand, nor his eye leaving reading, his heart thinking, except on the days of Nayrūz and al-Mihrajān, in order to prepare the necessities of life, dedicating the remaining days of the year to knowledge.

The scholar of *fiqh* Abū'l-Ḥasan ʿAlī ibn ʿĪsā al-Walwālijī said:

> I visited Abū al-Rayḥān while on his deathbed, in his last moments, at the age of seventy-eight, and he said to me while in that

> state: "You had told me one day about the matter of maternal grandmothers?" I said, out of pity for him: "Whilst you are in this state?" He replied: "O you! That I leave this world knowing this matter, would that not be better than me leaving it while ignorant of it?" So I repeated what I had told him, and he memorised it, and he taught me what he had promised. Then I left his house, and soon after that I heard crying!

This great *imām* mastered five languages: Arabic, Syriac, Sanskrit, Persian and Hindi, and he wrote on Astronomy, Mathematics, Medicine, Literature, Linguistics, History and other disciplines, over 120 books. The famous orientalist Sakhau wrote about him: "He was the greatest mind known in history." The Science Historian Sarton wrote about him: "Al-Bayrūnī was the greatest of Muslim figures, and among the world's greatest scientists." See his biography and scientific contributions in *The Arab Scientific Heritage in Astronomy and Mathematics* by Qadrī Ḥāfiẓ Tuqān.

Sulaym al-Rāzī Always Writing, Teaching, Reading or Reciting, Without Breaks

In *Tabyīn Kadhib al-Muftarī* by *al-Ḥāfiẓ* ibn ʿAsākir, and *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfiʿiyyah al-Wusṭā* by Tājuddīn al-Subkī, in the biography of *Imām* Sulaym al-Rāzī, one of the greatest Shāfiʿī scholars of his time, died 337 AH, may Allah have mercy on him, it was reported that al-Tāj al-Subkī wrote: "He, may Allah have mercy on him, was very pious, accounting himself for time, not leaving any time to pass by without gaining some benefit, either writing, teaching or reading, and he used to write extensively.

Al-Ḥāfiẓ ibn ʿAsākir said that *Shaykh* Abū'l-Faraj al-Aṣfarāyīnī narrated that he (Sulaym) went to his house and came back, and said: "I read a *juz'* on the way." Abū'l-Faraj said: "Al-Mu'ammil ibn al-Ḥasan narrated to me that he saw Sulaym with his pen having lost its sharpness, and while he was sharpening it, he was muttering something and I knew that he was reading at the same time,

in order not to waste any time." That is he was remembering Allah so that no time would pass by without being used in some beneficial act of worship.

Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī Reads While Walking

Al-Ḥāfiẓ al-Dhahabī wrote in *Tadhkirat al-Ḥuffāẓ* in the biography of al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī the scholar of *ḥadīth* and historian of Baghdād, born 392 AH, died 463 AH, may Allah have mercy on him: "Al-Khaṭīb used to walk holding a book he was reading." That is in order not to waste time and to make use of the time spent walking by gaining some knowledge.

Imām al-Ḥaramayn Eats and Sleeps Out of Necessity, Not Habit

In *Tabyīn Kadhib al-Muftari* by *al-Ḥāfiẓ* ibn ʿAsākir, and *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfiʿīyyah al-Kubrā* by Tajiddīn al-Subkī, in the biography of *Imām* al-Ḥaramayn Abū'l-Maʿālī ʿAbdul-Malik ibn ʿAbdullāh al-Juwaynī al-Nisāpūrī, the Shāfiʿī scholar of *fiqh* and *uṣūl*, the theologian and great scholar, the *shaykh* of *Imām* al-Ghazālī, born 419 AH, died 478 AH, may Allah have mercy on him, we find the following:

> ʿAbdul-Ghāfir al-Fārisī said in his book *Siyāq Nisāpūr*: '*Imām* al-Ḥaramayn, the pride of Islam, the *Imām* of all the *Imāms*, the great Scholar of Sharīʿah, whose superiority is acknowledged in the East and West, the likeness of whom no eye has seen and never will after him. I heard him say: "I do not eat or sleep out of habit, I rather sleep when sleep overtakes me whether it is day or night, and I eat when I need to whatever time it is. He found the greatest pleasure in studying and seeking beneficial knowledge."'

Imām al-Ḥaramayn Studies Under a Philologist at Age Fifty

Shaykh Abū'l-Ḥasan ʿAlī ibn Faḍḍāl ibn ʿAlī al-Mujāshaʿī al-Qayrawānī the philologist, came to us in the year 469 AH, and was

generously received by *Imām* Fakhr al-Islām who started to learn grammar and study under him. The *Imām* was then fifty years old, and he used to take him to his house and read to him the book of "Iksīr al-Dhahab fi Sināʿat al-Adab" which he wrote. Abū'l-Ḥasan al- Mujāshaʿī, used to say: I had never seen a lover of knowledge like this *imām*, he seeks knowledge for the sake of knowledge."

Yaʿqūb al-Najīramī Reads While Walking

In *Inbāh al-Ruwāt ʿAlā Anbāh al-Nuhāt* by al-Qiftī, in the biography of Muḥammad al-Saʿīdi ibn Barakāt al-Nahawī, from Basra, then Egypt, born 420 AH, died 520 AH, may Allah have mercy on him, he wrote: "When I was a boy, I saw Abū Yūsuf Yaʿqūb ibn Khurrazādh al-Najīramī, walking. He was a dark old man, with a long beard, a round turban, and a book in his hand which he was reading as he walked."

Ibn ʿAqīl and Ibn al-Jawzī, the Ultimate Examples in Good Use of Time

At the highest position in the list of those who valued time and appreciated its importance and preciousness, and who were determined to fill it with good deeds, to make use of all moments, by writing, thinking, remembering and reminding, are the two great scholars of Ḥanbalī *fiqh*, who ranked among the greatest *imāms* of the Muslims:

Imām Abū'l Wafā ibn ʿAqīl al-Ḥanbalī, the student of al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, and *Imām* Abū'l-Faraj ibn al-Jawzī, his student, may Allah have mercy on them. I include here some details of their lives:

Ibn ʿAqīl: A World Genius

As for *Imām* Abū'l-Wafā' ibn ʿAqīl al-Ḥanbalī ʿAlī ibn ʿAqīl al-Baghdādī, *al-Ḥāfiẓ* ibn Rajab al-Ḥanbalī in his "Dhayl Ṭabaqāt al-

Ḥanābilah" wrote in his biography of the former, "he was born in 431 AH, and died in 513 AH, he was one of the best scholars, and one of the world's geniuses, of extreme intelligence and very vast and multi-disciplinary in knowledge."

Ibn ʿAqīl Does Not Waste a Moment of His Time

He used to say: I am not allowed to waste a moment of my life, for even if my tongue stops reading and debating, and my eyes stop reading, I can use my mind to reflect even when I am lying down. And when I get up, I do so to write something that has occurred to me, and I find that my desire to seek knowledge at the age of eighty is greater than it was when I was twenty.

Ibn ʿAqīl Chooses Hard Crust Softened with Water Rather than Bread to Save Time

And I seek to shorten my meal times as much as possible, to the extent that I choose to eat hard crust mixed with water rather than bread, because of the difference in ease of chewing, in order to save time for reading or writing something that may be of benefit. For the greatest profit made in the eyes of the wise people, by consensus of all scholars, is time, for it is a treasure in which opportunities are used. For indeed duties are numerous and times are fleeting.

Shaykh Ibn al-Jawzī said: *Imām* Ibn ʿAqīl was always busy seeking knowledge, searching for explanations of ambiguous issues and for the essence of things, and he made his book known as "Al-Funūn" (The Arts) a collection of his thoughts and observations.

The Diversity of Ibn ʿAqīl's Disciplines and Writings

He had around twenty books on different subjects, the greatest of which was *al-Funūn*, which is a massive book containing immense

benefits in admonition, exegesis, jurisprudence, the fundamentals of jurisprudence, theology, grammar, linguistics, poetry, history, and literature. It contains his debates, observations, his thoughts, and the products of his intellectual activity.

One of His Books, "Al-Funūn," is 800 Volumes Long

Al-Dhahabī said: "No one ever wrote a book bigger than this book; I have spoken to people who have seen over 400 volumes." Ibn Rajab said: "Some have said that it is 800 volumes long."[28]

The Best Use of Time and Way to Draw Closer to Allah is Seeking Knowledge

He, may Allah have mercy on him, wrote, in the introduction to his book *al-Funūn*:

> Indeed the best way to spend time, to keep oneself occupied, and to draw closer to the Lord, Glorified is He, is to seek knowledge that takes one out of the darkness of ignorance to the light of Allah's Way, and that is what I kept myself occupied with and spent my time in.
>
> And I continued to comment on the words of scholars which I have learnt, from the essence of books, and from the fruit of thoughts emerging from debates and discussions in the circles of scholars and gatherings of pious people, hoping that some blessing may be conveyed to me, which would drive ignorance away, perchance I may achieve some of what others before me have achieved.
>
> And even if the only immediate benefits were purifying time of being wasted in being occupied with bad habits in which the times of the ignorant masses are spent, then it would have been sufficient. And on Allah we rely for guidance, and He is Sufficient and the Best of those to be relied on.

Ibn ʿAqīl Says Before His Death: Let Me Delight in Meeting Allah

Ibn al-Jawzī said that when *Imām* Abū'l-Wafā' ibn ʿAqīl was on his death bed, women began to cry. Abū'l-Wafā' then said: "I had signed on Allah's behalf—that is he used to issue *fatāwa* clarifying the ruling of Allah on various issues and events between people- for fifty years—so leave me to delight in meeting Him."

This eminent *imām* only left behind his books and the clothes he was wearing, which were sufficient to pay for his shroud and debts. May Allah have mercy on him and reward him for his service to knowledge.

Dear reader, reflect on how using one's intellect, saving time, self-discipline and spending time on seeking knowledge and good can produce incredible results: books that are 800 volumes long, the largest book in the world, written by one person, Abū'l-Wafā' ibn ʿAqīl, in addition to many other books, reaching over twenty books, some of which contain ten volumes.

Little Things Add Up to a Lot, and Streams are the Gathering of Drops

There is nothing more true or beautiful than what *Imām* Bahāuddīn ibn an-Naḥḥās al-Ḥalabī (Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhīm), who died in 698 AH, may Allah have mercy on him, wrote, indicating that by doing a little regularly it adds up to an immense and amazingly great amount, as in the case of Abū'l-Wafā ibn ʿAqīl. He wrote in the biography of al-Suyūṭī in *Bughyat al-Wuʿāt*:

> To do a thing today, and the same tomorrow
> Gathering is the essence of knowledge
> Thus one may achieve wisdom
> For streams are but the gathering of drops

Ibn al-Jawzī's Writings Exceed 500 Books

As for *Imām* Abū'l-Faraj ibn al-Jawzī (ʿAbdur-Raḥmān ibn ʿAlī al-Ḥanbalī al-Baghdādī), he was born in 508 AH and died in 597 AH. He lived for 89 years and wrote over five hundred books.

The Necessity of Knowing the Importance of Time and Filling it With the Best of Occupations

Here is some of Ibn al-Jawzī's biography in order to perceive how he was very aware of the excellence of time and its value, and how he saved time when he had visitors who lengthened their visits. He, may Allah have mercy on him, wrote in his book *Ṣayd al-Khāṭir*, and *al-Ādāb al-Sharʿiyyah* of Ibn Mufliḥ al-Ḥanbalī:

> One must know the value of his time and its great importance, so that he should not waste even one moment except in worship, and should use it for the best, in order of priority, in speech and action. One's intention to seek goodness must be ever present, with no slackness, as much as the body is able to bear, for as the *Ṣaḥīḥ ḥadīth* says: "The intention of the believer is better than his action."[29]

Most People Waste Time in Useless Matters

Ibn al-Jawzī said:

> I have seen the majority of people making strange use of time! Spending long nights in useless talk, or reading books of ghazal [love poetry] and entertainment, and spending long days in sleep, and you would find them at the end of the day by the river Dijlah or in the markets [Ibn al-Jawzī lived in Baghdād]. I likened them to people chatting while on a ship that is moving fast while they are unaware of its movement! I found that rare were those who understood the essence of existence, and it is those you find gathering their provisions and preparing for their departure. Thus be ever conscious of the passing of time, and hasten to use it before it is too late, and compete against time.

Ibn al-Jawzī Seeks Refuge From the Company of the Idle

Ibn al-Jawzī said:

> I seek refuge from the company of the idle! I have seen many people who deal with me as they are accustomed to deal with others by repetitive visits, and they call that a service! They lengthen their sitting, and talk of things that are of no concern to us, moreover containing backbiting. This is something that many people nowadays do; perhaps some hosts require such talk, await it, and may feel loneliness without such visits, especially on the days of festivals and eid, when they visit one another, and are not satisfied with congratulations and greetings but fall into what I have mentioned before, wasting their time!

Pursued Activities that Did Not Hinder Attending to Guests

Ibn al-Jawzī said:

> Realising that time is the noblest of things, and that using it to do good is a duty, I disliked such behaviour and remained with them torn between two things: If I condemned it, it would cause discomfort for it would be against social customs, and if I accepted it, time would be lost! Thus, I avoided such meetings as much as possible, and in the case of such visits taking place, I spoke little to hasten the departure. I would prepare tasks that did not hinder conversation, during these visits, so that time would not be lost in vain. Thus I would, during such visits, cut paper, sharpen pencils, and bind books, for these are necessary duties, which require no great presence of mind or intellect, and busied myself with such activities during their visits, in order not to waste any of my time.

Only The Successful Realise the Nobleness of Time

Ibn al-Jawzī said:

> I saw many people who do not know the true meaning of life. For there are those who have been blessed by Allah by being rich and not needing to work, and you find them sitting in the markets most of the day looking at people, watching many an evil thing. Some of them enjoy playing chess, others pass their time

telling stories about the rulers and about the rise and fall of prices, and so on. I discovered that Allah, Glorified be He, did not guide people to the realisation of the nobleness of time and the importance of times of health, except the successful ones whom He blessed and guided, *And no one will be granted such goodness except persons of the greatest good fortune.*[30] We ask Allah, Praised and Glorified be He, to guide us to know the value of time, and to enable us to use it.

How the Salaf Conserved Time and Avoided Wasting It

The early ones—the *Salaf*—used to avoid wasting time. *Imām* al-Fuḍayl ibn ʿIyāḍ said: "I know people who count the words they say from one Friday to the next." Some people came to a man from the *Salaf*, and said: "We hope that we are not disturbing you?" He said: "To be honest, I was reading, and because of you I had to leave it!" An ascetic came to al-Sariyy al-Saqaṭī and found a group of people with him and said: "You have become the meeting place of the idle!" He left and did not sit down.

If the host is too soft, the visitor would wish to lengthen the visit further, and the host would thus be harmed. There was once a group of people sitting with Maʿrūf al-Karkhī. When their stay became too long, he said: "The angel of the sun will not tire of leading it, when do you intend to leave?"

Glorious Examples of Good Use of Time by the Salaf

Some of the *Salaf* would use every moment of their time. Dāwūd al-Ṭā'ī used to eat bread crumbs, and he used to say: "The difference between eating crumbs and chewing bread is the reading of fifty verses." ʿUthmān al-Baqillānī was always remembering Allah, and he said: "At meal times, I feel as if my soul is about to leave my body, because eating keeps me away from *dhikr*!" One of the *Salaf* advised his companions: "When you leave my house, go separately, thus one of you may read Qur'ān on his way, while when you go together, you would be chatting."

Know that time is too valuable to have even one moment wasted, for in the *Ṣaḥīḥ ḥadīth*, the Prophet ﷺ said: "Whoever says, 'Glory be to God, the Magnificent, and Praise be to Him' [*Subḥān'Allāh al-ʿAẓīm wa biḥamdihi*] will have a palm tree planted for him in Paradise." How many hours does one waste thus missing abundant reward? These days are like a farm. Is it then wise for one to stop planting seeds or to slacken in doing so?

Things that Help to Conserve Time

Among the things that help one to profit from time: Solitude as much as possible, keeping to greeting and necessary talk with those one meets, and eating little, for excessive eating causes one to sleep for long hours and waste the night hours. Whoever looks into the lives of the *Salaf*, and believes in reward, will realise the truth of what I have mentioned.

The Great Resolve of the Scholars of the Salaf and the Excellence of their Writings

The determination and self-discipline of the early scholars were high, which is reflected in their writings, which were the essence of their lives, despite the fact that most of their writings have been lost. This is because the ambition and determination of students had weakened, such that they became only interested in summaries, and were not motivated to write lengthy works, and they moreover became content with studying a few books, leading to the loss of many books that were not copied!

The path to be followed by the student of knowledge seeking perfection is to read the various books, and he should read much, for thus he would be inspired and stimulated by the knowledge of scholars and their great feats, which would motivate him to undertake arduous work. Moreover, no book is devoid of some benefit to be acquired from it.

I seek refuge from the lives of these contemporary people,

in whom we see no high aspiration to inspire beginners, nor any great piety to inspire ascetics. I admonish you to study the biographies of those before you and to read their writings, for reading their books is like seeing them, as it is said:

> I cannot see those homes with my eye
> Perhaps I may see those homes with my hearing

Ibn al-Jawzī's Thirst for Knowledge and Attachment to Books

Ibn al-Jawzī said:

> If I were to describe my state, then I am never content with reading books, and when I see a book that I had not seen before, it is as if I have found a treasure. I looked at the catalogue of books at the Madrasah al-Niẓāmiyyah, and it contained around 6,000 books. I also looked at the index of the writings of Abū Ḥanīfah, the books of al-Ḥumaidi—Muḥammad ibn Fattūh al-Andalusī al-Baghdādī, the companion of Ibn Ḥazm—and the books of our *shaykh* ʿAbdul-Wahhāb al-Anmāṭi, those of Ibn Nāsir, the books of Abū Muḥammad al-Khashshāb which were numerous, and other books which I was able to read.[31] And if I said that I read 20,000 books, then in truth it would be more, and I was then still a student.
>
> I benefited from reading those books by observing the lives of the early people, and the extent of their memorisation, their determination, their worship, the diversity of their disciplines, of which one would not know had one not read those books. Thus I disliked the current state of people and looked down on the weak determination of students nowadays. And to Allah is all praise.

Every Soul is a Container so Let Not Your Container Be Empty

Imām Ibn al-Jawzī, may Allah have mercy on him, also said in his gentle letter of advice to his son called *Laftat al-Kabid fī Naṣīḥat al-Walad*, urging his son to preserve his time:

> Know, dear son, that days are but hours, and hours are but breaths, and every soul is a container, hence let not any breath pass without any benefit, such that on the Day of Judgment you

> find an empty container and feel regret!
>
> Be aware of every hour and how it passes, and only spend it in the best possible way; do not neglect yourself, but render it accustomed to the noblest and best of actions, and send to your grave that which will please you when you arrive to it.

Ibn al-Jawzī Writes Four Notebooks Every Day

Al-Ḥāfiẓ ibn Rajab wrote in *Dhayl Ṭabaqāt al-Ḥanābilah* in his biography of Ibn al-Jawzī:

> He did not leave any discipline without writing a book in it. When asked about the number of his writings, he said: "More than 340 books, some of which contain twenty volumes while some are only one notebook-long."

Al-Muwaffaq ʿAbdul-Laṭīf said: "Ibn al-Jawzī wasted no time. He used to write four notebooks every day and wrote every year between fifty to sixty volumes."

Ibn al-Jawzī Wrote 2,000 Volumes by Hand

Al-Dhahabī in *Tadhkirat al-Ḥuffāẓ* and Ibn Rajab in *al-Dhayl* reported that Abū'l-Muẓaffar, the grandson of Ibn al-Jawzī, said: "I heard my grandfather saying while on the pulpit, towards the end of his life: 'I wrote with these two fingers of mine 2,000 volumes.'" Ibn al-Wardī wrote in *Tatimmat al-Mukhtaṣar fī Akhbār al-Bashar*: "It is reported that the books written by Abū'l-Faraj ibn al-Jawzī were collected, and then the number of days he lived were calculated and the number of books was divided by his lifetime, and it was concluded that he wrote nine notebooks every day."

The Pencil Shavings of Ibn al-Jawzī Used to Heat Water for Washing His Body in Preparation for His Funeral

Al-Qummī wrote in *al-Kunā wa'l-Alqāb*: "The shavings of Ibn al-Jawzī's pencils with which he wrote *ḥadīth* were gathered and

came to a large amount. He had requested that they be used to heat the water with which his body would be washed after his death, and so it was done, and they were more than sufficient."

Ustādh ʿAbdul-Ḥamīd al-ʿAlwajī of Iraq had written a book entitled *Mu'allafāt ibn al-Jawzī* which was published by the Iraqi Ministry of Culture and Guidance in the year 1385 AH, in which he enumerated Ibn al-Jawzī's books, which came to 519, varying in size from large 10-volume books to small booklets—and he missed some of his writings.

Ibn Taymiyyah Said the Writings of Ibn al-Jawzī Exceed 1,000

In the introduction to *Mu'allafāt ibn al-Jawzī*, al-ʿAlwajī wrote:

> *Al-Ḥāfiẓ* ibn Rajab al-Ḥanbalī wrote in *Dhayl Ṭabaqāt al-Ḥanābilah* that *Imām* Ibn Taymiyyah said in his *al-Ajwibah al-Miṣriyyah*: "*Shaykh* Abū'l-Faraj ibn al-Jawzī wrote many books on many issues. I had enumerated them and found them to be over 1,000 books, and later I saw others I had not included."

Al-Dhahabī on the Size of Ibn al-Jawzī's Works

Al-Dhahabī wrote in *Tadhkirat al-Ḥuffāẓ*, after mentioning a number of Ibn al-Jawzī's writings: "I have not heard of any scholar who wrote as much as this man." Then he reported the saying of al-Muwaffaq ʿAbdul-Laṭīf about Ibn al-Jawzī: "He wasted nothing from his time. He used to write four notebooks daily—in addition to his duties of teaching, compilation and issuing *fatwās*. And he has made a contribution in every fold of learning."

ʿAbdul-Ghaniyy al-Maqdisī's Management of Time

It is written in *Tadhkirat al-Ḥuffāẓ* in the biography of *al-Ḥāfiẓ* ʿAbdul-Ghaniyy al-Maqdisī, born 541 AH, died 600 AH, may Allah have mercy on him, that the *Imām*, scholar of *ḥadīth*, Taqiyyuddīn, Abū Muḥammad ʿAbdul-Ghanniyy ibn ʿAbdil-Wāḥid, al-Maqdisī, al-Jamālī, later al-Dimashqī al-Ṣāliḥī, al-Ḥanbalī, wrote

1,000 books, according to Abū Ṭāhir al-Salafī. He wrote an innumerable number of books, and he continued to write, narrate, and worship Allah, until his death.

Al-Ḍiyā' al-Maqdisī [his student] said that his teacher wasted none of his time. He used to pray *Fajr*, then teach Qur'ān, and perhaps he would also teach *ḥadīth*. Then he would make ablution and pray 300 *rak'āt* with al-Fātiḥah and Sūrat al-Falaq and Sūrat al-Nās, until just before the time of *Ẓuhr*. Then he would sleep for a short time, then pray *Ẓuhr*, after which he would teach or write until Maghrib. He would then break his fast if he had been fasting, then pray ʿIshā and sleep till midnight or a little later. Then he would make ablution and pray, and repeat that, until just before *Fajr*. He would make ablution seven times or more. He used to say: "I like to pray as long as my body is still humid." Then he would sleep for a short time until *Fajr*, and that was his schedule. He left behind over forty books, including some precious gems. See his rich biography in *Dhayl Ṭabaqāt al-Ḥanābilah* of Ibn Rajab.

Al-Fakhr al-Rāzī Regrets the Time Spent Eating

The historian and doctor Ibn Abū Uṣaybiʿah wrote in his book *ʿUyūn al-Anbā' fī Ṭabaqāt al-Aṭibbā'*, in the biography of *Imām* Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, the scholar of *tafsīr*, *uṣūl*, and theology, Muḥammad ibn ʿUmar, born in 543, died 606 at the age of sixty-three, may Allah have mercy on him, author of over two hundred books, varying in size from a 32-volume book such as his famous *tafsīr*, to short treatises. Judge Shamsuddīn al-Khū'ī related to us regarding *Shaykh* Fakhr al-Dīn that he said: "By Allah, indeed I regret spending time that could be spent seeking knowledge in eating, for indeed time is precious."

Ibn Sukaynah's Conservation of Time and its Use in Good Deeds

Narrator and historian Ibn al-Najjār wrote in *Dhayl Tārīkh*

Baghdād, and al-Dhahabī in *Siyar Aʿlām al-Nubalāʾ* in the biography of Ibn Sukaynah:[32]

> The *Shaykh*, *Imām*, scholar of *fiqh* and trustworthy narrator of *ḥadīth*, the great example, the scholar of Islam and pride of Iraq, Dhiyā al-Dīn Abū Aḥmad ʿAbdul-Wahhāb ibn ʿAlī ibn Sukaynah, al-Baghdādī al-Ṣūfī al-Shāfiʿī, born 519 AH, died 607 AH. He was the greatest scholar of his time in excellence of narration, knowledge, perfection, asceticism, worship, and good character, following the *Sunnah* and the way of the pious predecessors.
>
> Allah blessed him with a long life, until he repeated all his narrations many times. He was sought by students of knowledge from all countries. His times were preserved, his words counted. Not a a single hour passed without recitation of the Qur'ān, *dhikr*, *tahajjud*, or teaching. He would forbid people from unnecessary and unbeneficial talk or backbiting in his gathering. He left his house only to attend congregational prayer, Eid or funerals, and did not attend the common gatherings of the people.

His student Ibn al-Najjār said:

> I traveled in the east and the west, and saw scholars, *imāms* and ascetics, yet saw no one who reached higher perfection, was more devoted to worship, or had better character than him. I accompanied him for twenty years, night and day, and heard most of his narrations, and studied long works under him and benefited greatly from him.

Ibn Sukaynah Advises His Students: Do Not Say More Than "Salāmun ʿAlaykum"

Yaḥyā ibn al-Qāsim, the teacher at al-Niẓāmiyyah said that Ibn Sukaynah was exemplary in knowledge and action. He wasted no time. When we entered his gathering, he would say: "Do not add more than *"Salāmun ʿAlaykum,"* out of concern and desire to use time for discussing and approving rulings." Al-Madrasah al-Niẓāmiyyāh was the most prestigious school in Baghdād at the time.

How amazing indeed! He asks them to shorten the greeting

and not to waste time with the usual compliments when people meet, and orders them to begin study and discussion after the first greeting, in order to save time.

Ibn Taymiyyah al-Jadd (the Grandfather)

Among those who sought to save time, through unexpected ways, was *Imām* Ibn Taymiyyah al-Jadd, Abū'l-Barakāt ʿAbdus-Salām ibn ʿAbdullāh ibn Taymiyyah al-Ḥarrānī al-Ḥanbalī, born 590 AH, died 653 AH, may Allah have mercy on him. Ibn Rajab al-Ḥanbalī wrote in *Dhayl Ṭabaqāt al-Ḥanābilah* in his biography:

> The *Imām*, recitor, scholar of *fiqh*, *ḥadīth*, *tafsīr*, *uṣūl*, philology, the *Shaykh* of Islam and *faqīh* of his time, a prominent figure of his time, our *Shaykh* Abū ʿAbdullāh ibn al-Qayyim said: "The brother of our *shaykh* ʿAbdur-Raḥmān ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥalīm ibn Taymiyyah narrated that his father said: 'Before the Grandfather—Majduddīn Abū'l-Barakāt—would go to the restroom, he would say: "Read this book for me, and raise your voice so I may hear you."'" This indicates his great desire to seek and attain knowledge and save his time.

Al-Ḥāfiẓ al-Mundhirī Copied 90 Books and 700 volumes by Hand, Other Than His Own Writings

Imām al-Nawawī, may Allah have mercy on him, wrote at the end of his book *Bustān al-ʿĀrifīn* about the qualities of some of the greatest prominent scholars under the chapter of "*Fī Ḥikāyāt Mustaṭrafah.*" He mentioned something he heard from his *shaykh* about his *shaykh Imām al-Ḥāfiẓ* ʿAbdul-ʿAẓīm al-Mundhirī, born in Cairo in 581 AH, died there in 656 AH, may Allah have mercy on him. He said:

> I heard our *shaykh* and master, the great *Imām*, noble master, trustworthy *ḥāfiz*, rigorous precise scholar, the pious, virtuous, ascetic, *mujtahid*, worshipper, one of the rare remaining trustworthy scholars of *ḥadīth*, the *muftī*, *shaykh* of the *imām*s and *muḥaddithīn*, Dhiyā' al-Dīn Abū Isḥāq Ibrāhīm ibn ʿIsa al-Murādī,

> saying, "On Wednesday, the sixth of Shawwāl of the year 658 AH,[33] at the Madrasah al-Bādarā'iyyah in Damascus, may Allah protect it, I heard *Shaykh* ʿAbdul-ʿAẓīm, may Allah have mercy on him, say: 'I scribed with my hand ninety books and 700 volumes.'" This was what was authored by other scholars on the sciences of *ḥadīth*. In addition to this, he wrote many more of his own works.

Al-Ḥāfiẓ al-Mundhirī Occupied by Knowledge at Mealtimes

Our *Shaykh* said: "I have not seen or heard of anyone striving harder to seek knowledge; he was ever busy with that by night and day." He said, moreover:

> I was his neighbour at the Madrasah, in Cairo. My house was above his for twelve years, and I never woke up during any night, at any hour of the night, without seeing the light of his lamp in his house while he was studying, and even during the time of eating, he was still busy with his books.

Al-Ḥāfiẓ al-Mundhirī Only Left the Madrasah to Offer Congratulations or Condolences

He also mentioned of his rigorous study and conscientious research and verification that which I am incapable of describing. He said: "He would only leave the school to offer condolences or congratulations, or for an important occasion, and for nothing else, except for *Jumuʿah* prayers, and would use all his time for knowledge, may Allah be pleased with him, and with our parents and all the Muslims."

A Dear Son of al-Ḥāfiẓ al-Mundhirī Dies, and He Follows His Funeral to the Door of the Madrasah

Imām Tājuddīn al-Subkī wrote in *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfiʿīyyah al-Kubrā*, in the biography of al-Ḥāfiẓ al-Mundhirī:

> He later taught at Dār al-Ḥadīth al-Kāmiliyyah, and he would only leave it to go to *Jumuʿah* prayer. He even had an intelli-

> gent pious son who was a *muḥaddith*, Rashīduddīn Abū Bakr Muḥammad, who died in 643 AH, and was one of the prominent gifted scholars of *ḥadīth*, who died during his lifetime. The *Shaykh* led his funeral prayer inside the school, and followed his funeral procession to the door, Then his eyes overflew with tears, and he said: "I entrust you to Allah, O my son." He left him, without leaving the school.

Ibn Mālik Was Always Praying, Reciting, Writing, or Reading

Of the prominent *imāms*, who used all moments of their time, even on their death beds while leaving this life, remaining attached to seeking knowledge till the last moments before death, was *Imām* Ibn Mālik al-Naḥwī, author of *al-Alfiyyah* and other prominent books of philology, Muḥammad ibn ʿAbdullāh, born in 600 AH, died in 672 AH, may Allah have mercy on him. In his biography in *Nafḥ al-Ṭīb*, al-Maqarrī wrote:

> Ibn Mālik, Allah have mercy on him, read voraciously and was quick in his revision and verification. He would only write something in his book after verifying its origin, as is the case of the trustworthy great scholars. He was only seen praying, reciting, writing, or reading. It was related that he went once with his friends to visit Damascus, and when they arrived at their destination, they forgot about him for some time. When they looked for him, they could not find him, until they finally found him reading some books.

Ibn Mālik Memorises Eight Verses of Poetry Before His Death

Even more astonishing in his great attachment to knowledge is that he memorized some poetry, about eight verses his son taught him, on the day of his death. This shows that one achieves according to one's aspiration and determination. May Allah reward him greatly for this undying determination. He died in Damascus in 672 AH, and was buried near the mountain of Qāsiyūn. His grave is still well-known there, may Allah have mercy on him.

Imām al-Nawawī Did Not Lie Down for Two Years

Al-Ḥāfiẓ al-Dhahabī wrote in *Tadhkirat al-Ḥuffāẓ* in the biography of *Imām* al-Nawawī (Yaḥyā ibn Sharaf al-Ḥawrānī):

> He is the unique *Imām* and scholar of *ḥadīth*, the master, *Shaykh* al-Islām, master of the pious ones, Muḥyiddīn Abū Zakariyyā, Yaḥyā ibn Sharafiddīn ibn Murrī al-Ḥizāmī al-Ḥawrānī al-Shāfiʿī, the author of many beneficial books. He was born in 631 AH in Nawā, Ḥawrān, came to Damascus in 649 AH, and lived at the Madrasah al-Rawāḥiyyah eating its bread. He said: "And I remained for two years without my side touching the ground." He memorized *al-Tanbīh* in four and a half months, and read a quarter of *al-Muhadhdhab* in the remaining months of the year, under his *shaykh* Isḥāq ibn Aḥmad.

Al-Nawawī Studies 12 Lessons Daily With Verification and Commentary

A-Dhahabī also said that his student, Abū'l-Ḥasan ibn al-ʿAṭṭār, said that *Shaykh* Muḥyiddīn mentioned to him that every day he used to study twelve lessons under his *shuyūkh* covering the explanation and correction: Two lessons from *al-Wasīṭ* (in the science of *fiqh*); a lesson from *al-Muhadhdhab* (also in *fiqh*); a lesson on combining the two *Ṣaḥīḥs* (in the science of *ḥadīth*); a lesson on *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*; a lesson on *al-Lumaʿ* by Ibn Jinnī (on Arabic grammar); a lesson from *Iṣlāḥ al-Manṭiq* (on linguistics); a lesson on conjugation; a lesson in *uṣūl al-fiqh*, sometimes from *al-Lumaʿ* of Abū Isḥāq and sometimes from *al-Muntakhab* of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī; a lesson on *Asmā' al-Rijāl*, a lesson on *uṣūl al-dīn;* and a lesson on philology. He said: "I used to note everything related to the lessons, explaining what is obscure, clarifying any ambiguous expressions, correcting the language, and Allah blessed my time."

Al-Nawawī Used to Eat One Meal Every Day and Night

Abū'l-Ḥasan ibn al-ʿAṭṭār said:

> Our *Shaykh* may Allah have mercy on him said that he never wasted time, whether by night or day, except in seeking knowledge, and even when he was outside, he would always be either repeating what he learnt or reading. He did that for six years, after which he started to write, teach, offer advice and benefit others. He used to eat only once every day and night, once after the last *ʿIsha* prayer, and drank only once before *Fajr*, and did not eat fruits and vegetables and said: "I fear that it would soften my body and make me sleepy." Furthermore, he did not marry.

Al-Nawawī's Asceticism and Harsh Clothing, Food and Living

He dedicated himself to knowledge, writing and spreading knowledge, and to worship, litanies [*awrād*], fasting and remembrance, bearing harsh living conditions in eating and clothing as a permanent state, wearing a plain robe and a small turban. He died in 676 AH, may Allah have mercy on him, having lived forty-five years, leaving behind many great writings which if divided by the number of days he lived, they would come to 4 notebooks every day.

PhysicianIbn al-Nafīs, a Pioneer in Medicine, Fiqh, and Time Management

Of the eminent scholars and prominent brilliant physicians who used every moment of their time recording thoughts and observations, at the strangest of times, is the pioneer of medicine in his time, Ibn al-Nafīs, of Damascus, then Egypt. From his biography in *Rawḍāt al-Jannāt* by al-Khawānisārī, quoting *al-Wāfī bil Wafayāt* by Ṣalāhuddīn al-Ṣadafī, we quote the following:

> He is the noble wise *imām*, the scholar ʿAlā'uddīn ibn al-Nafīs ʿAlī ibn Abī Ḥazm al-Qarshī, from the town of Qarsh, who was born in Damascus around the year 610 AH, died in Cairo in 687 AH, may Allah have mercy on him. He was a pioneer in the science of medicine, of neither equal nor comparable intelligence. He wrote unique and marvelous books on medicine, including *al-Shāmil* in medicine, the index of which indicates that it consists of 300 volumes, as mentioned by some of his companions, of which he fin-

ished 80. He wrote *al-Muhadhdhab fī'l-Kuḥl* and *Sharḥ Qānūn ibn Sīnā* in many volumes, and other books on medicine.

He was well-versed in logic, and wrote a short treatise on it, and wrote a commentary on Ibn Sīnā's *al-Hidāyah,* which is a book on logic. He also wrote on the sciences of *uṣūl al-fiqh, fiqh*, Arabic language, *ḥadīth*, Literature, and others. He wrote a good commentary on part of *al-Tanbīh* by Abū Isḥāq al-Shīrāzī on the branches of Shāfiʿiyyah, from its beginning to the chapter on "Sahw," and he taught *fiqh* at al-Madrasah al-Masrūriyyah in Cairo.

Imām Burhānuddīn Ibrāhīm al-Rashīdī said that when al-ʿAlā' ibn al-Nafīs intended to write, sharpened pencils would be brought for him and he would sit facing the wall and begin to write his thoughts directly, just like a flowing river. When the pencil would lose its sharpness, he would throw it and pick up another one, without wasting time sharpening it. He used to write directly, without revision.

Ibn al-Nafīs and Ibn Wāṣil Discussing Till Fajr

Al-Sadīd al-Dumyātī, one of his students in Cairo, said:

[Ibn al-Nafīs] met one night with Judge Jamāl al-Dīn ibn Wāṣil, and I was spending the night there. When they finished the last *ʿIshā'* prayer, they began their discussion, moving from one science to another, and *Shaykh* ʿAlā al-Dīn was discussing calmly without any unease, while Qāḍī Jamāl al-Dīn would become tense, his voice would rise, his eyes would redden and his veins would dilate. They remained like that until dawn. When they finished, Qāḍī Jamāl al-Dīn said: O *Shaykh* ʿAlā al-Dīn, as for us, we have legal matters and rules, while you have treasures of all sciences.

Ibn al-Nafīs Records Some Medical Chapters While Bathing

Another said:

Shaykh ʿAlā'uddīn entered the bath in Bāb al-Zahūmah, and in the middle of his bath, he came out to the area where one left

one's clothes, and asked for a pen, ink and paper, and started writing a paper until he finished it. Then he went back inside and finished his bath. He was a generous man, never keeping from benefiting others whether by day or night. A number of princes, as well as Muhadhdhab al-Dīn ibn Abī Ḥulayqah, the chief doctor, Sharaf al-Dīn al-Ṣaghīr, the most prominent physician, and people from various classes used to attend his gathering at his house. Under his authority and that of ʿImād al-Dīn al-Nābulsī, physicians graduated in Egypt and in Cairo, where he had built a house. During his last illness after which he died, some of his fellow physicians advised him to drink some wine, holding that his illness would be cured by it, but he refused to drink any and said: "I will not meet Allah with some wine inside me." He did not marry. He left his house, his books, and wealth as an endowment for the Manṣūrī hospital.

Ibn al-Nafis Discovered the Circulatory System Seven Centuries Ago

To summarise, he was a great *imām*, and many eminent scholars said that he was the "second Ibn Sīnā." One must not forget that Ibn al-Nafis is the one who discovered the blood circulatory system, seven centuries ago, a great discovery in the field of medicine.

Despite his eminence and unique genius in medicine as well as other sciences, he was humble, describing himself to his students and graduates as *al-Mutaṭabbib* (the one who seeks or claims to be a physician), while he was the pioneer of medicine in his age, as seen in an example of his beautiful writing, a copy of which is shown in his biography in al-Zarkalī's book *al-Aʿlām*.

Shaykh Ibn Taymiyyah Left Innumerable Writings, Thanks to His Good Time Management

Even more remarkable is the example of *Shaykh* al-Islām Ibn Taymiyyah Abū'l-ʿAbbās Aḥmad ibn ʿAbdul-Ḥalīm al-Ḥarrānī al-Dimashqī al-Ḥanbalī, born 661, died 728, may Allah have mer-

cy on him, at the age of fifty-seven, leaving around five hundred written volumes. He could not have written hundreds of books, such that neither his companions, nor even the *Shaykh* himself could count them, without complete use of his time in learning, writing and worship.

In his biography by Ibn Shākir al-Kutbī in *Fawāt al-Wafiyyāt*: "His writings reached 300 volumes." Al-Dhahabī said: "It is not unlikely that his writings up to this day reach 500 volumes." His student *Imām* Ibn al-Qayyim wrote a treatise on the names of his books, which was 22 pages long, in which he mentioned 350 writings, varying from large books to short treatises.

Shaykh Ibn al-Qayyim, may Allah have mercy on him, said in his book *al-Wābil al-Ṣayyib Min al-Kalām al-Ṭayyib*:

> The sixty-first benefit from *dhikr* [the remembrance of Allah]: It gives one's memory strength, such that with *dhikr* one can achieve things one did not imagine being able to achieve. And I witnessed of the strength of *Shaykh*-al-Islām Ibn Taymiyyah, in his speech, in his habits, in his courage, and in his writing, an amazing abilityt He used to write in one day what one would copy in a week or longer.

Regarding the number of *Shaykh* Ibn Taymiyyah's writings, we follow what *al-Ḥāfiẓ* Ibn Rajab wrote in *Dhayl Ṭabaqāt al-Ḥanābilah*: "As for his writings, they have filled the lands, and surpassed the limit of counting, such that no one can enumerate them."

Dear reader, such is the effect of the effort of a single person in using his time. Those who know him hold that his writings are innumerable.

Shaykh Ibn Taymiyyah Reads and Teaches During Illness and Travel

The reason behind this astounding richness in writing is that *Shaykh* Ibn Taymiyyah, may Allah have mercy on him, never stopped reading and discussing knowledge and teaching it, wheth-

er in residence or travel, in health or illness. His student *Imām* Ibn al-Qayyim, may Allah have mercy on him, wrote in his book *Rawḍat al-Muḥibbīn*:

> Our *Shaykh* Ibn Taymiyyah related to us: "I had an illness and the doctor said to me: 'Your reading and discussion will make your illness worse.' I replied: 'I cannot bear to stop that, and I consult your knowledge, is it not the case that when the soul is pleased and happy, the body finds strength and can resist illness?' He said: 'Indeed.' Then I said to him: 'My soul finds happiness in knowledge, so my body finds strength and I feel better.' He said: 'That is beyond our treatment.'"

Al-Shams al-Aṣbahānī Eats Little to Save Time

Al-Ḥāfiẓ ibn Ḥajar wrote in *al-Durar al-Kāminah*, and al-Shawkānī in *al-Badr al-Ṭāliʿ*, in the biography of the scholar *Imām* Shams al-Dīn Abū'l-Thanā' al-Aṣbahānī (Maḥmūd ibn ʿAbdur-Raḥmān ibn Aḥmad), the Shāfiʿī scholar of *fiqh*, *uṣūl*, and *tafsīr*, born in Isfahan in 674 AH, died in Cairo in 749 AH, may Allah have mercy on him, the following:

> He studied in his homeland, became well-versed and excelled in all sciences. Then he came to Damascus after a visit to al-Quds in Safar 725 AH, where his virtues and knowledge astounded its people. *Shaykh* Taqiyy al-Dīn ibn Taymiyyah heard him and honoured him greatly. He once said: "Be silent so that we may listen to the speech of this noble man the likes of whom never entered this land." Then he moved to Cairo, where he died. He was known for his attachment to knowledge and extreme reluctance to waste any of his time, to the extent that some of his companions related that he deprived himself of eating so that he would not need to drink and hence would not need to relieve himself, in order to save time.

Reflect on the value of time in the eyes of this noble *imām*, as a result of the value of knowledge.

Al-Shawkānī's Lessons Reached Thirteen Lessons Every Day

Scholar and judge al-Shawkānī (Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī), the scholar of *tafsīr*, *ḥadīth*, *fiqh*, and *uṣūl*, the well-known author, born 1173 AH in the town of Shawkān in Yemen, died 1250 AH, may Allah have mercy on him, wrote in his autobiography in his book *al-Badr al-Ṭāliʿ* talking about his childhood and education, using the third person, in humility:

> And his lessons reached thirteen every day and night. Some were lessons he attended by his *shuyūkh*, and some he would teach his students, and he continued in that way for a period of time. Then he devoted himself to teaching, whereby his studebwould attend over ten lessons by him every day, in many sciences, including *tafsīr*, *ḥadīth*, *uṣūl*, grammar, philology, exegesis [*tafsīr*], eloquence, logic, *fiqh*, philosophy and poetry.

At the same time as he was learning from his *shuyūkh* and teaching his students, he was also answering *fatwā* enquiries from the people of Ṣanʿā' and other towns for twenty years. He was then appointed judge of Ṣanʿā' in 1229 AH for twenty years, until his death. He died, may Allah have mercy on him, having written 114 books, many of which he mentioned in his autobiography.

Al-Alūsī Wrote His Tafsīr by Night While He Taught Thirteen Lessons Daily

The *Imām* and *Mufassir* al-Alūsī (Abū'l-Thanā' Shihāb al-Dīn Maḥmūd ibn ʿAbdullāh al-Alūsī) of Baghdād, the *Muftī* of Baghdād and the seal of the *mufassirīn*, he was born in 1217 AH, and died in 1270 AH, may Allah have mercy on him:

> He was anxious to ensure his knowledge increased every moment. He did not tire of gaining beneficial knowledge, searching for hidden rarities. His day was spent addressing *fatwā* enquiries and teaching, the early part of the night in conversing with friends and visitors, and the end of his nights on writing pages of his *tafsīr*, which he would give in the morning to the scribes he employed, who would take ten hours to edit and copy them.

> He would teach fourteen lessons daily, while during those days when he would be occupied with his *tafsīr* and *fatwā* enquiries, he would teach thirteen lessons from long books, and he continued to write even during his final illness."[34]

His *tafsīr* is a rare marvel among the books of *tafsīr*, and it is sufficient to bestow prominence, excellence and knowledge on his legacy. He had written it by night as mentioned above, and it has been said:

> And make most of the nighttime for your wishes
> For nighttime is the day of the shrewd ones

The *Imām* and author Abū Hilāl al-ʿAskarī said:

> One who stays up by night for some need is in fact at rest
> One who spends his money in a good cause is in fact gaining it

Al-Faqʿasī al-Ḥamāsī said:

> You will be as if you lost not one night
> If in the end you achieved that which you sought

Ibn Nubātah al-Saʿdī said:

> You who reproach me for exhausting myself
> And enduring sleeplessness in the darkness of night
> If a man aspires to the highest summits
> Then the least of losses will be good sleep

Another poet said:

> He loved the depth of nights neglected by the heedless
> As if the shooting stars of the night were beautiful eyes

ʿAbdul-Ḥayy al-Luknawī Died at 39, His Books Exceeding 110

We need not go far back in time. *Imām* ʿAbdul-Ḥayy al-Luknawī, of India, who died around one hundred years ago, in 1304 AH, at the age of thirty-nine, wrote over 110 books, varying in size from large volumes to short treatises, all dealing with beneficial issues and difficult problems.

The Sage of the Ummah al-Thānawī's Writings Exceeded 1,000

The *Shaykh* of India, Maulana, the sage of the *Ummah*, Ashraf ʿAlī al-Thānawī who died around forty years ago, in 1362, aged eighty-one, had written over 1,000 books. That is the bounty of Allah which He bestows on whom He wills. That was achieved thanks to preservation and good use of time. Indeed those who know the value of time are the rare successful ones, who compose great volumes of work in their short lives.

Writings of the Early Scholars Show Their Conservation of Time

Here I shall mention what our *shaykh* and scholar Muhammad Zāhid al-Kawtharī, may Allah have mercy on him, said concerning a number of the most famous and voluminous *tafsīrs* of the Qur'ān, the length and quality of which indicate their writers' great dedication to knowledge and their good use of time, which allowed them to write such books, about which one is amazed to hear, let alone read.

Some of the Great Voluminous Books of the Early Scholars in Tafsīr and its Sciences

Our *shaykh* wrote in his book *Maqālāt al-Kawtharī*, regarding some ways of rendering service to the Holy Qur'ān:

> What has been written by the people of knowledge in revealing the precious meanings of the Holy Qur'ān cannot be enumerated, from their different perspectives, in their emphasis of narration, or interpretation, and the various arts and sciences of the Qur'ān, with their different approaches and backgrounds in emphasising a particular aspect of the marvels of the Holy Qur'ān.
>
> I ask of the honourable readers to allow me to mention some writings of the scholars of this *Ummah* in this context as an example of their great efforts in writing such books. The *tafsīr* of *Imām* Abū'l-Ḥasan al-Ashʿarī known as *al-Mukhtazan* is 70 volumes long according to al-Maqrīzī in *al-Khiṭaṭ*, while the *tafsīr* of Qāḍī

ʿAbdul-Jabbār al-Hamadhānī known as *al-Muhīt* is 100 volumes long. The *tafsīr* of Abū Yūsuf ʿAbd al-Salām al-Qazwīnī, known as *Ḥadāiqa Thāta Bahjah*, was at least 300 volumes long. Its author had made it an endowment and chose its headquarters to be the mosque of *Imām* Abū Ḥanīfah in Baghdād, and later it was among the books lost during the Mogul invasion of Baghdād! However, I heard from one of the scholars of India that he saw part of it in the catalogue of one of the libraries.

Al-Ḥāfiẓ ibn Shāhīn has a *tafsīr* by use of *ḥadīth* which is 1,000 volumes long. Al-Qāḍī Abū Bakr ibn al-ʿArabī has a *tafsīr* entitled *Anwār al-Fajr*, which is around 80,000 pages, and it is known to exist in our lands—that is, the libraries of Istanbul and Turkey—but I have not succeeded in finding it despite my long search for it. Ibn al-Naqīb al-Maqdisī, one of the *shuyūkh* of Abū Ḥayyān had a *tafsīr* which was around 100 volumes long, some of which can be found in the libraries of Istanbul.

As for the largest *tafsīr* to be found today—as far as we know—it is the *tafsīr* of *Fatḥul Mannān*, attributed to the scholar Quṭbuddīn al-Shīrāzī, which is 40 volumes long, the first of which is found in Dār al-Kutub in Egypt, in which one finds his plan for the *tafsīr*, and in the libraries of Muḥammad Asʿad and ʿAlī Bāsha—Ḥākim Oghli—in Istanbul one finds other volumes which make up one complete edition.

The scholar Muḥammad al-Zāhid al-Bukhārī wrote around 100 volumes of *tafsīr*, as well as *al-Manhal al-Ṣāfī*. The scholars of this *Ummah* wrote innumerable tafāsīr besides the aforementioned ones, from various perspectives. They had also rendered a similar service in compiling the narrations which explain the Qur'ān, and clarifying the details of general issues contained within it.

The Scholars Who Wrote Profusely

The scholar of *fiqh* and *usūl*, the researcher Muḥammad al-Ḥasan of Morocco, may Allah have mercy on him, in his amazing book *al-Fikr al-Sāmī fī Tārīkh al-Fiqh al-Islāmī*, in the biography of Ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, wrote about "the prolific authors" mentioning Ibn Jarīr, Ibn al-Jawzī, and others. I quote from what he wrote here,

some of which will repeat what has already been said.

Ibn Jarīr, the Greatest Author of Islam in terms of the Quantity and Quality of His Writings

Muḥammad al-Ḥasan said that Ibn Jarīr achieved excellence, writing abundantly, but with perfection, with wide benefits. He left behind over 350,000 pages of writing. This is the richest academic heritage left, as far as we know, so may Allah, the Best of creators be glorified. Thus he earned an elevated position, and none of the early scholars attained the extent of his writing combined with perfection in quality and the benefit achieved until this day. Those qualities were not found together in any other scholar, such that it may be said that he is the greatest author of Islam.

Al-Bāqillānī Does Not Sleep Until Writing 35 Pages

In *al-Dībāj al-Mudhahhab* it is written that Qāḍī Abū Bakr Muḥammad ibn al-Ṭayyib al-Bāqillānī prayed forty *rakʿāt* every night, and would not sleep until writing thirty-five pages from memory.

The Numerous Works of Ibn Abū al-Dunya, Abū ʿAsākir, and Ibn Shāhīn

Ibn Abū al-Dunyā left behind one thousand writings. Ibn ʿAsākir wrote his *Tārīkh* [*History*] in 80 volumes. Al-Suyūṭī said the most profuse author was Ibn Shāhīn, who wrote 330 books, including his *al-Tafsīr* composed of 1,000 volumes and *al-Musnad* of 1,500 volumes. Al-Suyūṭī said: "And this is from amongst the blessings of contracting time like space, from the heritage of *al-Isrā'* and *Laylat al-Qadr.*" (Reported in *al-Minaḥ al-Bādiyah.)*

The Numerous Works of Ibn Ḥazm and Ibn Abū Ḥātim al-Rāzī

Imām Abū Muḥammad ʿAlī ibn Ḥazm left behind 400 volumes of

writing comprising around 80,000 pages. *Imām* Abū Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn Abū Ḥātim al-Rāzī wrote many books in *fiqh*, *ḥadīth* and history, including his book *al-Musnad* comprising 1,000 volumes, which he mentioned in *al-Ṭabaqāt al-Subkiyyah.*

The Numerous Works of al-Ḥākim al-Nisāpūrī

Abū ʿAbdullāh al-Ḥākim, known as Ibn al-Bayyiʿ the author of *al-Mustadrak ʿalā al-Ṣaḥīḥayn,* wrote around 1,500 volumes, including *Takhrīj al-Ṣaḥīḥayn, al-ʿIlal, al-Amālī, Fawā'id al-Shuyūkh, Tārīkh Nisāpūr,* and others.

The Numerous Works of Abū'l-Ḥasan al-Ashʿarī

The writings of *Imām* Abū'l-Ḥasan al-Ashʿarī reached fifty books of various sizes, mostly on discrediting deviant trends and sects, which is among the most difficult and time-consuming subjects.

The Numerous Works of Ibn Taymiyyah, Ibn al-Qayyim, and al-Bayhaqī

Taqiyy al-Dīn ibn Taymiyyah wrote 300 books in diverse fields, reaching around 500 volumes. His student Ibn al-Qayyim wrote around 50 volumes of various sizes. *Imām* al-Baihaqī wrote 1,000 volumes, all original, beneficial, and unparalleled, and he fasted for thirty years.

The Numerous Works of Muḥammad ibn Suḥnūn al-Mālikī

Muḥammad ibn Suḥnūn, the famous Tunisian scholar left behind his great tome of a hundred volumes in *fiqh*, biographies, history and other sciences, as well as *Aḥkām al-Qur'ān* and others.

The Numerous Works of Abū Bakr ibn al-ʿArabī al-Maʿārifī

Imām Abū Bakr ibn al-ʿArabī al-Maʿārifī, buried in Fez, wrote his

voluminous *tafsīr* in eighty volumes, as well as other books including commentaries on al-Tirmidhī's [*hadith* compilation], *al-Muwaṭṭa'* and *Aḥkām al-Qur'ān*, as well as *al-Qawāṣim wa'l-ʿAwāṣim* and *al-Maḥṣūl fi'l-Uṣūl*, all unique books of extraordinary quality.

The Numerous Works of Abū Jaʿfar al-Ṭaḥāwī

Imām Abū Jaʿfar al-Ṭaḥāwī wrote many books, and wrote one thousand pages on one question: Whether the pilgrimage of the Prophet ﷺ was *Qirān, Ifrād* or *Tamattuʿ*. And this is in no way unique among the scholars of Islam.

The Numerous Works of Abū ʿUbaydah, Ibn Surayj and Ibn Ḥabīb al-Andalusī

The writings of Abū ʿUbaydah—Maʿmar ibn al-Muthannā—reached two hundred in various sciences. The writings of Ibn Surayj reached four hundred. The writings of ʿAbdul Malik ibn Ḥabīb the scholar of al-Andalus reached a thousand books, mentioned in *Nafḥ al-Ṭīb*.

The Voluminous Works of Some of the Early Scholars

Their writings comprised many volumes. The book of Ibn al-Jawzī's grandson, *Mir'āt al-Zamān,* in history, is in forty volumes. *Tārīkh Baghdād [History of Baghdad]* of al-Khaṭīb was fourteen volumes long; *al-Aghānī* twenty volumes long, while *al-Kāmil* of Ibn al-Athīr was made of twelve volumes. *Sharḥ al-Nabāt* of Abū Ḥanīfah al-Dīnawarī was sixty volumes long, and the writings of Yaʿqūb ibn Isḥāq al-Kindī, known as the philosopher of the Arabs, reached 231 books—and in fact exceeded 300 books—in philosophy, medicine, engineering and many other sciences. However, they varied in length from ten to hundreds of pages, bearing in mind the difficulty of obtaining writing material in their times.

The Numerous Works of Some of the Later Scholars Are Not Equivalent to the Early Ones

As for the later scholars, writing material was more accessible to them, yet they did not reach the level of their predecessors, such as *al-Ḥāfiẓ* ibn Ḥajar, author of *Fatḥ al-Bārī, al-Iṣābah*, and others, al-Dhahabī, or al-Suyūṭī, whose writings exceeded four hundred, but most of them were of shorter length, down to a page or two. Another scholar whose writings were even more numerous was *Shaykh* Abū'l-Fayḍ Muḥibbuddīn Murtaḍā al-Ḥusaynī al-Wāsiṭī, al-Zabīdī al-Ḥanafī, who was born and brought up in India and lived in Egypt. Sufficient are *Sharḥ al-Qāmūs* and *Sharḥ al-Iḥyā'* as proof of that, two widely beneficial books which were popular in the Muslim world, of high quality and meticulous care.

That was a quick note regarding those who wrote profusely, as narrated by scholar al-Ḥajawī, may Allah have mercy on him, written in the context of his mentioning the numerous writings of *Imām* Ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī.

Conserving One's Time Lengthens One's Lifetime and Enriches One's Legacy

What incited me to include that was my wish to explain how that immense flow of abundant amazing books was written, and how they were gathered. It was all thanks to valuing time, conserving it and managing it, without losing an hour or a moment. For through good time management, one's legacy grows and prospers, and one's lifetime is prolonged, and short times and lives are blessed by Allah, who bestows His bounty on whomever He wills, and He is the Owner of Mighty Grace.

I conclude this section on scholars who valued their time, making use of every moment, benefiting and producing the sweetest of fruits of knowledge, by including a brief biography of *al-Ḥāfiẓ* Abū'l-Qāsim ibn ʿAsākir al-Dimashqī, for it should motivate one's determination and wake up the heedless.

The Immensity of al-Ḥāfiẓ Ibn ʿAsākir's Contribution to Islamic Literature

Al-Ḥāfiẓ Abū'l-Qāsim ibn ʿAsākir al-Dimashqī (ʿAlī ibn al-Ḥasan), born in Damascus in 499 AH, died there in 571 AH, may Allah have mercy on him, made use of every moment of his time, such that academic institutions are unable to print all his contributions to Islamic heritage. He wrote them alone, by hand. He researched, wrote, classified, ordered, and edited them, presenting to people a lasting legacy, a wonder of his vast knowledge and amazing memory, strong determination and discipline, and talent in abundant and unique writing. I include here a brief overview of his biography taken from three books, restricting myself to passages related to his wide travels, abundant writings, and use of every moment of his time.

Historian and judge Ibn Khallikān wrote in *Wafayāt al-Aʿyān* in his biography:

> [Ibn ʿAsākir] was the most prominent scholar of *ḥadīth* of al-Shām in his time, and one of the most prominent *Fuqahā* [jurist] of the *Shāfiʿī madhhab*. He was particularly dedicated to the science of *ḥadīth* and became known for it. He strove hard in compiling the *ḥadīth* such that he gathered more than any other scholar. He traveled widely to various lands, met with scholars, and was the companion of *al-Ḥāfiẓ* Abū Saʿd ʿAbdul-Karīm ibn al-Samʿānī in his journey. The number of scholars he met in various places in the land of Islam reached seven thousand.
>
> He was trustworthy and of high morals, gathering *ḥadīths* and their chains of narration. He studied in Baghdād, then returned to Damascus, then traveled to Khurasan, and went to Nisāpūr, Harat, Isfahan, and al-Jibāl. He wrote many beneficial books and authenticated the chains of many *ḥadīths*. He had deep knowledge of *ḥadīth* and was gifted in compilation and writing. He wrote eighty volumes of *al-Tārīkh li Dimashq [History of Damascus]*, which is a book following the style of *Tārīkh Baghdād* of al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, in terms of his criteria in choosing whom to quote. Yet it surpassed it many times in size, scope,

> comprehensiveness, and benefit.
>
> When that *Tārīkh* became well known, our *shaykh* and scholar *al-Ḥāfiẓ* Zakiyy al-Dīn Abū Muḥammad ʿAbdul-ʿAẓīm al-Mundhirī the scholar of *ḥadīth* of Egypt, said: "I believe that this man made the intention to write this book when he was mature enough to think, and began to gather information from that time, for otherwise life is too short for one to write such a book after becoming preoccupied with teaching and narration."
>
> He had spoken the truth indeed, for whoever contemplates the *Tārīkh* realises this. For how could one find the time to write such a book, considering it represents only what he finally selected and authenticated following several stages of writing and innumerable drafts. Furthermore, he has other important writings and interesting volumes.

The number of books of *al-Ḥāfiẓ* Abū'l-Qāsim ibn ʿAsākir exceeded fifty books, including the 80-volume *Tārīkh Madīnat Dimashq*, as mentioned above.

The Great Resolve of Ibn ʿAsākir and His Extensive Travels in Muslim Lands

Al-Dhahabī wrote in *Tadhkirat al-Ḥuffāẓ*:

> He is the great *Imām* and scholar of *ḥadīth*, the Muhaddith of al-Shām, the pride of the *imāms*, Abū'l-Qasim ibn ʿAsākir, the author of many books, including *al-Tārīkh al-Kabīr*. He was born in early 499 AH, and started learning *ḥadīth* in 505 AH, under the care of his father and brother *Imām* Diya'uddīn Hibat-Ullāh. He studied *ḥadīth* … in Damascus, and traveled at the age of twenty, and he studied… in Baghdād, then… in Mecca, then… in al-Kūfa, … Nisāpūr, … Isfahan, … Marw, … Herat, and compiled *al-Arbaʿīn al-Buldāniyyah*—forty *ḥadīth* from forty *shuyūkh* from forty countries. And the number of his *shuyūkh* reached 1,300 scholars, which included over eighty women scholars. Many people narrated on his authority, including his companion on his journey Abū Saʿd al-Samʿānī.

Then al-Dhahabī enumerated his writings, which reached around

fifty books, and he dictated in circles of knowledge 408 lessons, each equivalent to a book. His son, the scholar of *ḥadīth* Bahā al-Dīn al-Qāsim said:

> My father, may Allah have mercy on him, regularly kept to congregational prayer and to recitation, completing the recitation of the Qur'ān every week, and completing it every day in Ramadan. He used to do *Iʿtikāf* [seclusion for worship] in the eastern minaret of the Mosque of Damascus. He offered a lot of supererogatory prayers and was often engaged in *dhikr.* He dedicated himself during the middle-night of Shaʿbān, and the nights of the two Eids to prayer and *dhikr,* and he brought himself to account for every moment that passed! For forty years, since his *shuyūkh* granted him qualification to narrate and teach, he dedicated himself fully to compiling and teaching even during his leisure and solitude.

Al-Ḥāfiẓ Abū'l-ʿAlā' al-Hamadhānī said:

> Abū'l-Qāsim ibn ʿAsākir was known in Baghdād as a shining flame, due to his intelligence, enthusiasm, and dedication. Abū'l-Mawāhib ibn Sasrā said [to Ibn ʿAsākir]: "Did our master see anyone like him?" He replied: "Does not Allah say: *Ascribe not purity to yourselves.*[35] I said: "Allah also said: *And proclaim the grace of your Lord.*"[36] He said: "If one were to say, 'My eyes have never seen anyone like myself,' he would have been truthful."

Then Abū'l-Mawāhib said:

> And I say I have never seen anyone like him, and no one who was endowed with all his qualities, such as following one mission for forty years, always praying congregational prayers in the first row—except when he had an excuse, regularly observing *Iʿtikāf* in the month of Ramadān and the ten days of Dhū'l-Ḥijjah, having no interest in acquiring property and building houses; for he avoided all that, and avoided seeking positions of *imāms* and preachers, and rejected them when offered to him, and dedicated himself to enjoining the good and forbidding the evil, not fearing the blame of any blamer.

Ibn ʿAsākir's Dedication to Knowledge, His Numerous Shuyūkh and Shaykhāt, and His Excellence and Conscientiousness

Imām Tājuddīn al-Subkī wrote in *Ṭabaqāt al-Shafiʿiyyah al-Kubrā* in his biography:

> He is the eminent *Imām*, the *Ḥāfiẓ* of the *Ummah*, Abū'l-Qāsim ibn ʿAsākir, and we do not know any of his forefathers by the name of ʿAsākir, but he was rather known by that name. He is the servant and advocate of the *Sunnah*, the *imām* of the scholars of *ḥadīth* of his time, the seal of the great Ḥuffāẓ, the destination of the journeys of seekers of knowledge.
>
> He devoted himself to various sciences, occupying himself only with knowledge and action, the two accompanying him, and were his sole desires. He possessed a memory that missed no point, a rigorous authenticator with ingenious ways and criteria and meticulous perfection, equating him to his predecessors, if not excelling them, and a width of knowledge which rendered all else lacking in his presence.
>
> He learnt from many people, and the number of his scholars reached 1,300 *shuyūkh* and over 80 *shaykhāt* [women scholars]. He traveled to Iraq, then Mecca, then Medīna, then he traveled to the lands of the non-Arabs. He studied in Isfahan, Nisāpūr, Marw, Tibriz, Mihana, Yabhaq, Khusrujird, Bistam, Damighan, Arrayy, Zanjan, Hamadhān, Asadabad, Jayy, Herat, Bawan, Bagh, Bushang, Sarkhas, Nuqan, Simnan, Abharm Marand, Khuway, Jarbaẓaqan, Mushkan, Ruẓrawar, Hulwan, Arjish. He also studied in Anbar, Rafiqa, Rahba, Maridin, Makisin and other cities in many lands, traveling far and wide, not tiring from the length of the journey, alone, except for his *taqwā* which he took for a companion, and a determination which aspired to the highest of goals as a precious prize.

His *Shaykh* al-Khaṭīb Abū'l-Faḍl al-Ṭūsī said: "We do not know of anyone deserving this title of *al-Ḥāfiẓ* in this time except him." Ibn al-Najjār said:

> He was the *imām* of the *muḥaddithin* of his time, and the possessor of the highest position in memorisation and perfection, wide knowledge of the sciences of *ḥadīth*, trustworthiness and noble-

ness, high quality of writing and teaching, and the seal of this field.

> I heard our *shaykh* ʿAbdul-Wahhāb ibn al-Amīn saying: One day I was with *al-Ḥāfiẓ* Abū'l-Qāsim ibn ʿAsākir and Abū Saʿd ibn al-Samʿānī, seeking *ḥadīth* and meeting scholars. We met one *shaykh*, and Ibn al-Samʿānī stopped him to verify a *ḥadīth* from him, but when he came to the part which he wished to read and verify, he could not find him, and was distressed. Ibn ʿAsākir said to him: What is the part you want to read? He replied: the book of *al-Baʿth wa al-Nushūr* [Resurrection] of Ibn Dāwūd, learnt from Abū al-Naṣr al-Zaynabī. He said to him: "Do not worry," and he read it, or part of it, from memory.

Shaykh Muḥyiddīn al-Nawawī said about him, and I quote from his handwriting: "He is the *Ḥāfiẓ* of al-Shām, or rather of the whole world, the absolute *imām*, the trustworthy precise authenticator of *ḥadīth*."

Ibn ʿAsākir's Great Concern for His Learning

His son, *al-Ḥāfiẓ* Abū Muḥammad al-Qāsim related:

> My father had learnt from his *shuyūkh* many books of which he obtained no copies, relying on the copies of his friend *al-Ḥāfiẓ* Abū ʿAlī al-Wazīr, for what Ibn al-Wazīr wrote down, my father did not, and vice versa.
>
> I heard him one night talking to a friend of his under the moonlight in the mosque. He said: I travelled but it is as if I had not travelled! And I learnt but it is as if I had not learnt! I thought that my companion Ibn al-Wazīr will return with the books I had learnt, such as *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, the books of al-Bayhaqī, and others. But he resided in Marw and remained there.
>
> I hoped that another friend of mine will arrive, one known by the name of Yūsuf ibn Fārawā al-Jayyānī, or another one, Abū'l-Ḥasan al-Murādī, for he had said to me: Perhaps I will come to Damascus and from there go home to al-Andalus. However, none of them came to Damascus, and I thought it was necessary for me to travel once again to study these great books.

> A few days later, a man came to his house and said: Abū'l-Ḥasan al-Murādī has come. My father went to him, welcomed him and received him in his house, and he brought with him four boxes full of books he had copied. My father was extremely happy, and thanked Allah for facilitating the arrival of what he had learnt from him, without further hardship, and saved him from traveling again. He copied those books, until he obtained that which he sought, and he was such that whenever he obtained a part of it, it was as if he had possessed the ownership of this world, may Allah have mercy on him and be pleased with him.

These were glimpses from the life of this eminent *imām*: *al-Ḥāfiẓ* ibn ʿAsākir al-Dimashqī, in which I perceived amazing marvels and entertaining wonders. Had it not been for his conservation of time, and good use of minutes and seconds, he would not have been able to write those great huge beneficial works, which academic institutions are incapable of printing today, let alone write their likes. Thus, dear readers, let us all use every moment of our time, for it is the treasure of blessing and goodness.

Careful Distribution of Activities According to the Time Suitable for Them

What one must highlight here when considering time is that academic work must be given the right time that is suitable for it. For some acedemic activities are appropriate for any time or state of mind, due to their ease, such as copying, light reading and the like, which do not necessitate a free mind, complete concentration, and deep precise reflection.

On the other hand, there are academic activities which can only be fully achieved during times when the mind is free, when intuition and understanding are apt, when blessings abound, such as the hours of late night, dawn, morning, and the hours of the peace and quiet of night and the complete emptiness and silence of space and time. These peaceful and blessed times must be taken advantage of, in order to solve problematic issues and diffi-

cult questions, to distangle complicated problems, to correct and edit writings, to seek to clarify ambiguous obscure expressions, to memorise texts, and the like.

The Best Times and Places for Memorisation

Al-Ḥāfiẓ al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī wrote in his book *al-Faqīh wa'l-Mutafaqqih*, regarding the best times for memorisation and the most suitable places which facilitate the task:

> Know that memorisation has its times which must be kept in mind by those who seek to memorise, and that it has places where one seeking to memorise must remain.
>
> The best of times are the late hours of the night, followed by the middle of the day, then the mornings rather than afternoons. Memorisation by night is better than memorisation by day, and the times of hunger are better for memorisation than hours of satiety. The one seeking to memorise should assess his state of hunger, for some people are not able to memorise in a state of extreme hunger and thirst, hence they should quench it by something light, and should not eat much.
>
> As for the best places, then they are upper rooms rather than lower halls, and any place that is far from distractions, where the heart is empty from anything that may distract it and occupy it, or overcome it and prevent it from memorising. It is not recommended to memorise near plants or greenery, nor near rivers, or on the sides of the road, for such places are seldom free from things that prevent concentration and peace."

His advice regarding places is different from that of Abū Naṣr al-Farābī.[37] Al-Qāḍī ibn Khallikān wrote in his biography in *Wafayāt al-Aʿyān*: "He was a solitary man, not mixing with people. During his stay in Damascus he was mostly near rivers, or gardens, where he wrote his books and received his students."

Avoiding Noise When Memorising or Studying

Students of knowledge are recommended to seek solitude and

stay away from people and noise, because solitude facilitates clarity of thinking, and when the mind is clear and understanding is correct. They are seeing knowledge through the balance of the intellect, and this balance is extremely fine, and is affected by the least of desires or distractions, making it deviate from its proper state. Thus in seeking specific and difficult matters of knowledge one must give careful consideration to the time and place, so that comprehension may be achieved and conception and judgement may be correct.

The *Imām* of *ḥadīth* and *fiqh*, Abū Sulaymān Ḥamd ibn Muḥammad al-Khaṭṭābī, al-Bustī, born in 319 AH and died in 388 AH, may Allah have mercy on him, said:[38]

> When I am alone, my mind is clear, and I find
> Thoughts as bright as lightening in the darkness
> While when my ear is distracted by the clamour
> Of the shouters, I become unable to articulate my thoughts.

Some knowledge is of little consequence, has minimal benefit, is superflous (who absence is not considered a deficiency), has little benefit, and the need for it is even less. Time should not be spent on seeking such knowledge, nor should minds be preoccupied with it. For preoccupation with the less-preferred things prevents obtaining what is preferred and the better, and causes one to consume time and energy and prevents one from achieving one's goals and wishes. Ṣāliḥ ibn ʿAbd al-Quddūs wrote:[39]

> If you seek knowledge, then know that it is a burden,
> Hence take care of what you carry
> And if you find something better than it, then
> Preoccupy your heart with that which is better.

The wise man must devote [his] keen mind and precious time to better actions and the higher aspirations, in order to attain what is most excellent and useful.

Fighting Feelings Boredom and Lack of Motivation

Ibu Hilāl al-ʿAskarī wrote in his book *al-Ḥath ʿalā Ṭalab'l-ʿIlm* that Ibn Jarw al-Mawṣilī[40] said: "One should delay one's lesson of literature and poetry to his time of boredom." Ibn al-Murāghī[41] said: "One must trick oneself in learning."

He means that when one is bored or unmotivated, one should not give in to that or interrupt one's lesson or learning, but should rather deal with his lack of motivation and strive against one's boredom, until he overcomes it and achieves vitality and the revival of spirit.

Ways to Overcome Boredom, Sleepiness, and Laziness

This may be achieved sometimes through such actions as chewing gum, leaving an enclosed room for open space, moving from one room to another, taking a quick cold or hot shower, drinking a light drink, eating something light, talking to a friend, reciting some poetry, reciting Qur'ān in a loud voice, changing one's posture, walking or going up, changing the subject or book being studied, or similar actions. There is a suitable way for everybody, and motivation has a key, which is not hidden from the intelligent determined ones.

Need to Devote Oneself to the Important Matters Before the Less Important Ones

Al-Ḥāfiẓ al-Baghdādī, may Allah have mercy on him, said: "Knowledge is like seas which can never be contained and minerals which can never exhausted, so occupy yourself with the most important of it, for whoever occupies himself with the unimportant loses the important."

That is what was refered to by al-ʿAbbās ibn al-Ḥasan al-ʿAlawī, who was one of the prominent scholars and the ingenious poets, one of the companions of the Caliph Harūn al-Rashīd and

then Caliph al-Ma'mūn, in his precious advice which I wish to include here fully for the deep insight and eloquent expression contained in it.

Al-ʿAbbās al-ʿAlawī on Giving Priority to What is Important

Al-ʿAbbās, may Allah have mercy on him, said:

> Know that your mind cannot contain everything, hence dedicate it to the important matters. Know that your money is not sufficient to enrich all people, hence devote it to the rightful people. Know that your generosity cannot be enough for all the people, hence seek to reserve it for the people of grace. Know that your night and day cannot satisfy all your needs, even if you strive hard, hence divide them carefully between times of work and times of rest.
>
> For occupying your mind with that which is unimportant is undermining what is important,[42] and the money you spend in useless expenses you will lack when you need it for necessary ones. And the generosity you bestow on those undeserving of it will undermine you when you are unable to bestow it on people of grace. Spend your night and day on unnecessary matters and you will regret it in times of need.

These are glimpses highlighting the value of time in the lives of those noble scholars and *imāms*, only some of whom I have mentioned, and they were all the pride of Islam, nay the pride of humanity.

> Those are people whose honor Allah raised
> And no other honor excels it, however great it may be

Henceforth, dear reader, you shall not be astonished when you hear or read that certain scholars wrote over a hundred books that contributed to enriching every science, for the reason behind their success is that they made use of all their time, and avoided excessive curiosity or were not heedless of the passing of time. They used every moment, minute and hour, and thus produced such lasting legacies.

Scholars Who Wrote Fifty or a Hundred Books

Ustādh Jamīl al-Aʿẓam al-Dimashqī, who died in 1352 AH, may Allah have mercy on him, wrote a book called *ʿUqūd al-Jawhar fī Tarājim man Lahum Khamsūna Taṣnīfan Fami'atun Fa Akthar* (*The Pearl Chains, On The Biographies of Those who Wrote Fifty to a Hundred Books and More*), in which he mentioned many scholars who were known for the abundance of their writings. He mentioned Ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, Ibn al-Jawzī, al-Nawawī, Ibn Sīnā, al-Ghazālī, Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, Ibn al-Qayyim, ʿAlī al-Qārī, al-Munāwī, ʿAbdul-Ghanī al-Nābulsī, ʿAbdul-Ḥayy al-Laknawī, and others, whose works exceeded fifty books.

If you read the biographies of these noble scholars and those like them, you will feel motivated by their lives to appreciate the value of time, to join their ranks if you have the ambition and determination, such that you do not leave this world except that you have left behind thirty, forty, or fifty books. And Allah increases in creation what He wills, and He bestows His mercy on Whom He chooses, and Allah is All-Sufficient, All-Knower.

Useful Ways to Facilitate Gaining Time and Benefiting from it

In order to conserve time and gain it, follow the advice of the early scholars concerning the characteristics of the seeker of knowledge which qualify him to acquire knowledge and of whom excellence is expected: he must be fast at writing, fast in reading, and fast in walking.[43]

Being a fast walker enables the student to be able to visit all the *shuyūkh* in a short time, while being a fast writer and reader reduces the time spent on that which can be used for other tasks, and to increase in knowledge. These characteristics undoubtedly facilitate increasing knowledge and learning from scholars in the shortest time and life.

I added to the above a fourth quality: that one must be fast at eating, for if he were not, and was instead slow and engrossed

in eating, the time he saved through his fast reading, writing, and walking would be wasted through the length of the time spent in eating! Thus he would not know how to manage his time well, nor how to benefit from the above advice.[44]

Eating, Sleeping and Resting for the Seeker of Knowledge Must Be According to Necessity

Imām al-Nawawī, may Allah have mercy on him, wrote in the magnificent introduction to his great book *al-Majmūʿ*:

> [The student] must be concerned for knowledge, persevering regularly in studying at all times, by night and day, in residence or travel, and must not spend his time in anything other than knowledge, except according to necessity, such as eating, sleeping, taking short breaks in order to dispel boredom, and other similar necessities.

Abū'l-Wafā' ibn ʿUqayl: I Strive to Shorten my Mealtimes

Imām Abū'l-Wafā' ibn ʿUqayl al-Ḥanbalī, may Allah have mercy on him, wrote:

> I strive my utmost to shorten my mealtimes as much as possible, to the extent that I choose to eat bread and with water, rather than bread alone, because of the difference in time in chewing, in order to save time for some reading or writing some beneficial matter. Indeed, the best profit in the eyes of the wise ones, by the consensus of the scholars, is time; for it is a profit in which opportunities are sought; for tasks are many, and times are fleeting.

Al-Suyūṭī's Explanation of How the Seeker of Knowledge Can Gain Time

Al-Ḥāfiẓ al-Imām al-Suyūṭī, may Allah have mercy on him, highlighted the need of the seeker of knowledge to be fast at eating, as well as walking and writing, in order to conserve time, in two verses of poetry in which he said: "Our *Shaykh* al-Kinānī told us about his father the famous preacher, who said, 'Hurry, O seeker

of knowledge, in three things: eating, walking, and writing.'"[45] The *shaykh* al-Kinānī mentioned here is the *imām* and supreme judge ʿIzziddīn Aḥmad ibn Ibrāhīm al-Kinānī al-Miṣrī al-Ḥanbalī, may Allah have mercy on him.

Lost Time Never Returns!

O dear reader, O wise intelligent perceptive brother, you must preserve your time from waste, for the time that you live is a transient state which cannot be repeated nor returned. It is said:

> What has passed has gone
> and what is anticipated is unknown
> And you have but the hour in which you are living

Thus, seek to gain time and benefit from it, by organising yourself and managing your times and tasks: as a student or teacher, writer or reader, listener or reciter, or as a worshipper. And do not wrong yourself by killing time, wasting hours of your life and moments of your existence, wronging yourself and being wronged, seeking rest and laziness, and leaving noble deeds and elevated positions.

Laziness is the Worst Companion and Love of Rest Brings Regret

Imām Abū'l-Faraj ibn al-Jawzī, may Allah have mercy on him, wrote in his gentle letter in which he advised his son, which he called *Laftat al-Kabid fī Nasīḥat al-Walad*:

> Laziness in doing noble deeds is the worst companion! Love of rest and idleness leads to regret which exceeds any pleasure, so be aware and tire yourself for your benefit, and regret what has passed and what you have wasted. Strive to catch up with the ranks of the perfect ones as long as there is a chance, water your tree so long as it has life, and remember the hours you have wasted, for they would be sufficient as a reminder, as they were spent on the pleasure of laziness, while opportunities for reaching noble levels were wasted!

Motivation may slacken and some time may be wasted, but when encouraged it is revived, and motivation stops only because of lack of determination and ambition. For whenever amibition is high, it cannot be satisfied with little.

> If one is high he would aspire to attain the highest summits
> While those who are low are content with what is lowest

Aspiring Noble Deeds and Perfection is a Sign of Nobility

Then know that seeking the virtuous deeds is the end goal of those who strive, and that there are varying levels of good deeds. There are people who see virtue to be asceticism, while others see it as occupation with worship.

In fact, the highest virtues are none other than combining knowledge and action, for when they are achieved, the person is raised to the highest status, for that is the aspired goal, and according to one's ambition, opportunities arise. Thus, your ambition must be to seek perfection. Some people restricted themselves to asceticism, and others devoted themselves to knowledge, while yet others combined complete knowledge with complete action. However, not everything one desires is achieved, nor does every seeker find what he is seeking, nor does every one who begins a praiseworthy matter complete what he began! And not everything one wishes for one achieves, or as the famous poet Abū al-Ṭayyib said:

> And not every lover of goodness is a doer of it
> Nor does every doer of it complete it!

But one must strive, and each will have that for which he was created for facilitated for him, and Allah, Glory be to Him, is the Giver of Aid.

Most Important Ways to Gain Time

Indeed, the most important ways of gaining time are: organising

one's time and activities, avoiding idle useless gatherings, avoiding excessive curiosity in everything, keeping the company of the serious, intelligent, time-conscious people, reading about the eminent scholars and then motivating biographies—such as the aforementioned ones—taking pleasure in gaining time and using it for academic achievement, engrossing oneself in the pleasure of reading and increasing one's knowledge and understanding. For that makes one realise the value of time, and motivates one to conserve it, to gain it and not waste it.

Time is Life

The rightly-guided teacher and adviser Ḥasan al-Bannā, may Allah have mercy on him, said: "Whoever knows the real value of time knows life itself, for time is life." The jurist and poet ʿUmārah al-Yamanī, who died in 569, may Allah have mercy on him, said in a poem, quoted in his biography in *Wafayāt al-Aʿyān* of Ibn Khallikān:

> If your capital is your life, then beware
> Of spending it in what is not necessary,
> For between the alternation of night and day
> Is a battle, the army of which brings wonders

The famous Egyptian poet Aḥmad Shawqī also wrote:

> One's heartbeats say to him:
> Life is but minutes and seconds.
> Hence build for yourself a legacy after its death
> For a man's legacy is a second life

Ḥafṣah Bint Sīrīn: Action is But During Youth

The real and effective period of life is one's youth, for youth is the time for action and achievement, and production and contribution, when strength is abundant, ambition is high, and diseases, problems, and obstacles—due to fewer commitments—are fewer. The eminent Tābiʿiyyah Ḥafṣah Bint Sīrīn used to say: "O youth,

exert yourselves while you are young, for I believe action is only during youth."[46]

Imām al-Nawawī wrote in his valuable introduction to his important book *al-Majmūʿ*: "The seeker of knowledge must seek to learn during times of leisure and vitality, and in a state of youth, physical strength, aptitude of mind and freedom from preoccupations, before the symptoms of incapacity."

Imām Aḥmad: "I likened Youth to a Thing I Had in My Sleeve Then It Fell"

A long life shortens day after day, yet you often forget that it is fleeting and will not return, so you do not use it and benefit from it, and you think it is ever-long, lasting, slow, while the truth is far from that. *Imām* Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, may Allah be pleased with him, said: "I only likened youth to something I had in my sleeve, then it fell!"[47] And he lived 77 years. For youth, even if extended, is little, and life, even if prolonged, is short. May Allah bless him who said:

> The *adhān* is made in the baby's ear at birth
> While the prayer is delayed till his death
> A sign that his life is short
> Just like the time between *adhān* and prayer

Another said:

> And between the boy's birth and his death
> If one is honest with oneself—is a lifetime
> For what comes is like what has passed
> And it is but your little short time

The Spread of Intellectual Laziness Among Students Nowadays

It is unfortunate that intellectual laziness has become widespread among today's students, and they have come to prefer rest and idleness over striving and struggling. Luxury and all forms of useless curiosity have become a purpose of life for them, and plea-

sures have become a goal for them, such that they have no time left for studying and seeking knowledge. Their state has come to resemble that refered to by *Imām* Aḥmad ibn Fāris al-Rāzī, the philologist born in 329 AH, died 395 AH, may Allah have mercy on him, when he said:

> If you are harmed by the heat of summer
> And the dryness of autumn and the cold of winter
> And you are distracted by the beauty of springtime
> Then tell me: when will you seek knowledge?!

Al-Alūsī and His Great Concern for Learning and Knowledge

The eminent scholar Abū'l-Maʿālī Maḥmūd Shukrī al-Alūsī al-Baghdādī, the grandson, man of letters, who died in 1342 AH, may Allah have mercy on him, was known for his extreme earnestness and conservation of his time. He was distracted from his lessons neither by the heat of summer nor the cold of winter, and his students were often criticised and reprimanded for their lack of punctuality. His student *Shaykh* Bahjat al-Atharī said about him:

> I remember that I missed his lesson one day when the weather was very unsettled, the wind was blowing severely, it was raining hard, and the ground was very muddy—thinking that he would not attend the lesson. When I came to school the next day, he recited a verse of poetry in an angry tone: "And there is no good in he who is obstructed by heat and cold."[48]

During Old Age, One is Busier and Weaker Than During Youth

Some imagine that their days would be less busy in the future, that there would be fewer problems and obstacles, and that they will have more free time than during the past youth. However, experience shows quite the opposite, dear reader, so let me quote to you from the one who experienced that and concluded:

> The older you get, the greater your responsibilities will be, the more relations you will have, the more restricted your time will be and the lesser your energy. Time is more restricted after youth,

> and one's body is weaker, health is less abundant, vitality is lower and duties and preoccupations are more numerous and more severe! Hence, make use of your time while it is available to you, and do not attach your heart to the unknown, for each stage has its own occupations, duties and surprises.

Some even stress the lack of days of happiness and the abundance of days of hardship:

> They say life is all two days
> One is pleasures and one is hardships
> They were not truthful, for life is one day of happiness
> And many days full of hardships and surprises

Youth is the Time of Striving and Pleasures, and Old Age is the Time of Weakness and Problems

Action, striving, strength, glory, achievement and pure pleasures are sought during the time of youth, not during old age, which is the time for illnesses, worries, troubles and problems, as the poet said:

> Youth where glory is achieved, in it we find pleasure
> While there are no pleasures for the old

When old age and its illnesses affected Abū ʿUthmān al-Jāhiẓ, the famous author, he used to recite these two sad verses of poetry about the incapacity, weakness, and illness of old age:

> Do you hope when you are old to be
> As you were during the days of youth
> Your soul has deceived you
> No used garment is like a new one[49]

Do Not Be Idle in Worldly or Religious Matters

The successful wise person is the one who fills every second and moment of his present life and time with some beneficial action. Sayyidunā ʿUmar, may Allah be pleased with him, disliked idleness and wasting time with no benefit. He said: "I dislike to see any of you idle, with no action for this life or the hereafter!"

Time is the Most Precious Property, Yet the Easiest to Lose

May Allah have mercy on the pious minister and eminent scholar Yaḥyā ibn Hubayrah, al-Baghdādī al-Ḥanbalī, who was born in 339 AH and died in 560 AH, the *shaykh* of *Imām* Ibn al-Jawzī, who said: "Time is the dearest thing you can concern yourself with conserving, while I see that it is the easiest thing for you to lose."

An Article by Ustādh Aḥmad Amīn on Use of Time and the Effects of Losing it

I read an article by *Ustādh* Aḥmad Amīn the well-known Egyptian author who died in 1373 AH, under the tile of "Free Time" which he included in his book *Fayḍ al-Khāṭir,* which I wished to include at the end of this treatise—with some editing—since it is very appropriate and useful. He wrote:

> Thousands and thousands of students are staying at home during their four- or five-month summer holidays. Have their parents reflected on how this long time may be spent on something that could be beneficial for their bodies, minds, characters and their country? And half this nation—women—remain at home. But how do they spend their free time?
>
> If time is the means by which we invest money, acquire knowledge, and improve health—how much of it have we wasted? And how many lifetimes are wasted in vain, with no action for this life, nor for the hereafter?!
>
> Among the effects of wasting time is the waste of resources which could have been invested had it not been for neglecting time and ignoring how it could be used. For how much fallow land could have been cultivated, and how many companies could have been established, and how many various institutions could have been built and managed by using a portion of free time?
>
> Among the consequences of wasting time in our world is the unpopularity of books and abandoning of reading, and contentment with ignorance, for there are no spirits to feel the unbearability of ignorance, just bodies that find pleasure in rest! The effect in

the realm of finance is the same as that in the realm of books, for there too one finds the same satisfaction with little, contentment with the easy, stagnation and contentment with clerical work and jobs that do not require any effort or use of mind. Thinking and effort are for foreign workers who are energetic and know how to use their time.

I do not mean by conserving time that it should be all filled with work, or that life should all be seriousness and strife, with no rest nor leisure, or that it should be gloomy with no laughter nor happiness. Rather what I mean is that free time should not exceed times of work, and that free time must not be the purpose of life while work is on the margin.

Furthermore, I mean that free time should be subjected to the rule of mind just like work is, for through work we wish to achieve some purpose, and free time must also be spent for some purpose, whether for some health benefit such as permitted sports or psychological pleasure such as reading, or spiritual nourishment such as night prayer, reciting Qur'ān and *ḥadīth*, and supererogatory prayer and worship.

But if one's purpose is killing time, then that is no legitimate purpose, for time is life, and killing time is killing life! Hence those who spend long times playing chess or backgammon or in idle chatting or illegitimate entertainment, they are not working for a purpose that satisfies the mind, like those who wander around cafes, clubs and streets, seeking to kill time, as if time was one of their enemies!

The key to treating this problem is to believe that man is able to change his likes and dislikes as he wills, that is able to change his taste as he wills, and can thus train his taste to like things which it has never tried, and to abhor things it had liked before. For most people are able—with strong will—to divide their free time between what will benefit them physically, mentally and spiritually.

It is unfortunate that the majority of people believe that reading light stories or cheap magazines is sufficient nourishment for their minds, and consider it sufficient for their intellectual leisure, while they are nothing but intoxicants for the mind, and stimulants of sexual desires. A little patience and strength will prepare

one for serious study and beneficial reading.

Every cultured person is able to motivate interest in some serious field of knowledge which he can study in depth, whether it is literature, biology, physics, history of a particulary era, or any field of human knowledge. He could then feed his interest in it, then devote a part of his day for studying it, such that he becomes a new person, with a particular strength, with a respectable character, and with some benefit to bring to himself, to his people and to others. Thus the *ummah* will be rich through its sons and daughters, in all branches of science, knowledge and arts, relying on each in their particular specialisation on some aspect of life. The gatherings of people would then become of higher standard, their thinking will become more noble, their lives more dynamic, and they could learn from each other some culture, knowledge, literature, behaviour and valuing of time. Culture would then elevate, minds would expand, and life would become more noble. Vitality would increase and methods of living would be more facilitated and prosperous.

People would feel that it is their duty to nourish their minds just as they nourish their bodies, and that without such nourishment, they can have no life, and that such nourishment is impossible without conserving time, gaining it, and optimising benefit from it. Society and all people would then prosper, in terms of environment, intellect, industry, production, contribution, and benefit.

Make it a habit to always ask yourself: "What have I done in my free time? Have I acquired some health, wealth, knowledge, or benefit for myself or others?" Also question whether your free time is subjected to the rule of your mind, such that you had some praiseworthy purpose for which you spent your time? If that is the case, then you have succeeded, otherwise, keep trying until you do succeed. A poem states: "The patient one is likely to achieve his purpose / And the one who persists in knocking is likely to enter."

Thus a little time dedicated every day for a specific task may change the course of your life, and make you more upright and elevated than you could imagine.

> Ours is a nation that lives only a tenth of what it should live, or even less than that, whether concerning its economic productivity, intellectual culture, or state of health, while the rest of its life is spent in vain, filled with laziness and idleness, devoted to such things as backgammon, chess, idle chat, or simply nothing! All that is required for it to live its potential is discovering a way of filling time fruitfully and subject it to the rule of divine law and reason.

Time is Life and is Dearer Than Gold

The rightly-guided teacher *Ustādh* Ḥasan al-Bannā, may Allah have mercy on him, wrote in an article under the title of "Time is Life":[50]

> It is said: Time is made of gold!! That is true from the point of view of material value for those who only measure existence by that scale, but time is life for those who think beyond that.
>
> Is your life in this universe anything other than the time which passes between birth and death? Gold can vanish, but you may acquire many times what you lose. But you cannot return lost time that has passed! Therefore, time is more precious than gold, and dearer than diamonds or any precious stone or any profit, for it is life itself.
>
> Success is not only dependent on a precise plan and suitable conditions alone, but is furthermore dependent on the appropriate time, and our forefathers used to warn against premature as well as belated decisions. Success ensues when an action takes place at the moment appropriate for it, *And Allah measures the night and the day.*[51]
>
> Thus, those most affected by loss and failure are the heedless! *Many are the jinns and men We have made for Hell: They have hearts wherewith they understand not, eyes wherewith they see not, and ears wherewith they hear not. They are like cattle, nay more misguided: for they are heedless.*[52]
>
> Among the most wonderful depictions of the Prophet ﷺ concerning the value of time: "There is not a new day that rises except that a caller calls out: 'O son of Adam, I am a new creation,

and a witness over your action, hence take your provision from me, for I shall not return until the Day of Judgment.'"

Indeed, there is nothing in existence that is more precious than time. Times vary in their blessing and beneficial output and efficiency. There are times that are more blessed than others, days that are better in the sight of Allah than others, and months that are more noble than others. As a poem states: "It is blessing which makes an eye excel its counterpart / And makes a day the master of another."[53]

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ guided us to the realisation of the value of time and the way to benefit from it, in many *ḥadīths*, indicating that "the believer is between two fears: A past which has gone, with which he knows not how Allah will reckon, and a future that yet remains, for which he knows not what Allah has decreed." Thus, one must take from oneself [one's life] for oneself, from one's present life for the Hereafter, from youth before old age, and from life before death.

Thus, O dear brother, make use of time, for time is like a sword. Abandon saying, "I will," and then delaying, for there is nothing more harmful than this, and ask Allah for guidance and success for accepted deeds and beneficial time.

May Allah guide us and you, O dear reader, to conserve time and fill it with pious actions and beneficial knowledge, and make us among those aware of the value of time and life, such that they do not wrong themselves, their country or their *Ummah*, and such are the rightly guided.



NOTES

1. Qur'ān, 14:34.
2. Ibid, 14:32–34.
3. Ibid, 16:12.
4. Ibid, 17:12.
5. Ibid, 41:37.
6. Ibid, 6:13.
7. Ibid, 35:37.
8. Ibid, 92:1–2.
9. Ibid, 74:33–34.
10. Ibid, 81:17–18.
11. Ibid, 84:16–17.
12. Ibid, 89:1–2.
13. Ibid, 93:1–2.
14. Ibid, 103:1–2.

15. Ibid, 93:1-3.

16. Ibid, 103:1-3.

17. Ibid, 34:51-52.

18. Ibid, 34:54.

19. Ibid, 69:24.

20. Ibid, 40:75.

21. Thus was the scholars' love for knowledge—seeking it and discussing its questions and problems even at the time of leaving this life! In Ibn Ḥajar's book *Tawāli al-Ta'nīs bi Maʿāli Muḥammad Ibn Idrīs* on the virtues of *Imām* al-Shāfiʿī, he wrote that Ibn Abī Ḥātim said he heard al-Muzannī relate that it was said to al-Shāfiʿī: "How would you describe your love of knowledge?" He said: "When I hear a word I had not heard before, the organs of my body wish they all could have the pleasure of hearing it like my ears." It was said to him: "What about your concern for it?" He said: "It is like the concern of the greedy miser in seeking more wealth." It was said to him: "What about your seeking of it?" He said: "It is like the seeking of a mother seeking her lost only child."

22. Note that this statement is not a *ḥadīth* of the Prophet ﷺ as some people think. The fact that its meaning is correct does not allow one to attribute it to the Prophet ﷺ, for all that the Prophet ﷺ said is true, but not all that is true was said by him. The story about *Imām* Abū Yūsuf mentioned above is reported in *Faḍā'il Abī Ḥanīfah wa Aṣḥābih* (*The Merits of Abū Ḥanīfah and His Companions*) by Abū'l-ʿAbbās ibn Abū'l-ʿAwwām, p. 730; also reported in *Manāqib Abū Ḥanīfah* by al-Muwaffaq al-Makkī, 1:481; *Manāqib Abū Ḥanīfah* by Ḥāfiẓ al-Dīn al-Kardakī, 2:405; and in *al-Jawāhir al-Muḍiyyah* by al-Ḥāfiẓ al-Qarshī, 1:76.

23. Al-Muwaffaq al-Makkī, *Manāqib Abū Ḥanīfah,* 1:472.

24. The *muḥaddithīn* regarded any statement by the Prophet ﷺ, as well as any statement of a companion or *tābiʿī* or any *tafsīr* of any ambiguous term, etc., as that which is narrated with a sound chain,

as a "*hadīth*," and this is how the term is used here.

25. *Imām* al-Nawawī, may Allah have mercy on him, wrote in the introduction to his great book *al-Majmū*ᶜ in the chapter on "Manners of the seeker of knowledge": "And among his manners is that his ambition should be high, such that he is not satisfied with little while more is possible, that he does not delay his tasks, that he does not delay acquiring a benefit—even if it is small—if it is possible for him, even if he feels assured that it could be acquired in an hour's time, for delaying is harmful, and he could acquire further benefits at the later time."

26. *Wafayāt al-A*ᶜ*yān,* Ibn Khallikān, 1:104.

27. A volume (*juz'*) here is used as it was by the early scholars, which nowadays is equivalent to around thirty pages.

28. A small part of it was found, and printed by Dār al-Mashriq in Beirut in two volumes, in 1970 and 1971, edited by Dr. George al-Maqdisī.

29. This is part of a weak *ḥadīth* reported by al-Ṭabarānī in *al-Mu*ᶜ*jam al-Kabīr,* 6:228, on the authority of Sahl Ibn Saᶜd al-Sāᶜidī, may Allah be pleased with him. Also reported by al-Haythamī in *Majma*ᶜ *al-Zawā'id* on the same authority, 1:61, 109; also by al-Suyūṭī in *al-Jāmi*ᶜ *al-Saghīr,* 6:292.

30. Qur'ān, 41:35.

31. By referring to those libraries and their catalogues, he meant that he read all the books contained in them. These were the greatest libraries of Baghdad at his time.

32. Ibn Sukaynah was the *Shaykh* of Ibn al-Najjār.

33. The dating shows that *Imām* al-Nawawī used to write the day, month and year on which he heard anything from his teachers, for more accuracy and perfection.

34. *Al-Misk al-Adhfar,* Maḥmūd Shukrī al-Alūsī, grandson of the *Imām,* pp. 7-8, 19, quoted in *al-Alūsī as a Mufassir,* Dr. Muḥsin ᶜAbdul-

Ḥamīd, pp. 43, 97, 159.

35. Qur'ān, 53:32.

36. Ibid, 93:11.

37. Muḥammad Ibn Muḥammad Ibn Ṭarkhān, the most prominent Muslim philosopher, born in Fārāb near China in 260, died in Damascus in 339.

38. From his biography in *Yatīmat al-Dahr* by his companion al-Thaʿālibī, 4:385

39. In his biography in *Lisān al-Mīzān* by Ibn Ḥajar, 3:173

40. Abū'l-Qāsim ʿUbaydullāh Ibn Muḥammad al-Asadī al-Muʿtazilī, a man of letters, a linguist, a philologist, and a scholar of poetry, died in 387 AH; from his biography in *Muʿjam al-Udabā'* of Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī, 12:62.

41. Abū'l-Fatḥ Muḥammad Ibn Jaʿfar al-Hamadhānī al-Baghdādī, a man of letters, a linguist and philologist, died 371 AH; from *Bughyat al-Wuʿāt* of al-Suyūṭī, 2:70.

42. Often during exam periods, reading irrelevant texts that will not be examined is made more appealing to the student than reading the important ones that will be examined. And this is from the weakness of one's soul, determination, and diligence. For compulsory reading is demanding and requires forebearance for its completion, and hence is heavy on the weak soul. In contrast, the unrequired knowledge is light on the soul. So let the wise one beware not to respond to the desires of his soul. For this is from the deception of Satan and his luring away from the truth and that which is important. And Allah is the Guide.

43. Al-Ḥāfiẓ Muḥammad Ibn Ṭāhir al-Maqdisī said: I heard Abū Ismāʿīl al-Anṣārī saying: "The narrator must be fast at walking, writing, and reading," from the biography of al-Ḥāfiẓ *Shaykh* al-Islām Abū Ismāʿīl al-Harawī al-Anṣārī al-Ḥanbalī (ʿAbdullāh Ibn Muḥammad) who died in 481 AH, may Allah have mercy on him, in *Dhayl Ṭabaqāt al-Ḥanābilah* of al-Ḥāfiẓ Ibn Rajab al-Ḥanbalī, may Allah

have mercy on him, 1:59.

44. Al-*Imām* al-Qādi Ibn ʿIyād, may Allah have mercy on him, wrote in his book *al-Shifā' bi Taʿrīf Ḥuqūq al-Mustafā,* 1:109, Arabs and the wise have always extolled the virtues of eating and sleeping a little and shunned excesses in them. For excess in eating and drinking is an indication of greed, weak self-control and self-indulgence, as well as a cause of bodily diseases, laziness of spirit and clouded vision. In contrast, frugality of food and sleep is an indication of contentment and self-control, a cause of health, clarity of thought and sharpness of mind. In addition, excessive sleep indicates weakness and lack of ambition in the affairs of this world and the next, causes laziness, hardening, heedlessness and death of the heart, and wasting one's life in that which is not beneficial. And excessive sleep is a result of excessive eating and drinking, as Luqmān wisely said: "O Son! When the stomach is full, the mind sleeps, wisdom is silenced, and one's limbs are reluctant to worship." Sufyān al-Thawrī said: "Staying up the night is accomplished through eating little." Suḥnūn said: "Knowledge is not for the one who eats until he is full."

    ʿUmar Ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, may Allah be pleased with him, said: "Beware of excessive eating, for it causes laziness in prayer, corruption of the body, and diseases. And limit your eating, for that is further from extravagence, healthier for the body, and more conducive to worship. Indeed, the slave will never perish until he prefers his desire over his religion."

45. From his biography in *al-Kawākib al-Sayyārah bi Aʿyān al-Mi'at al-ʿĀshirah* by Najmuddīn al-Ghazzī, 1:229.

46. From her biography in *Ṣifat al-Ṣafwah* of Ibn al-Jawzī, 4:24. One may also read her biography in *Tahdhīb al-Tahdhīb* of Ibn Ḥajar, 12: 409. An eminent *tābiʿiyyah* from Baṣra, a noble scholar of *ḥadīth* and fiqh, the sister of the eminent *tābiʿi* scholar Muḥammad Ibn Sīrīn. She lived 90 years, was born in 11 AH, and died in 101 AH, may Allah have mercy on her.

47. *Manāqib al-Imām Aḥmad* by Ibn al-Jawzī, p. 198, first edition. *Imām* Aḥmad was born in 164 AH and died in 241 AH, may Allah have

mercy on him.

48. From the introduction by ʿAdnān Abdurrahmān al-Dūrī to *Itḥāf al-Amjād fīmā Yasihhu bihi al-Istishhād* by al-Alūsī, the grandson.

49. From his biography in *Tārīkh Baghdād* by al-Baghdādī, 12:219.

50. *Minbar al-Jumuʿah li'l-Imām al-Shahīd Hasan al-Bannā,* p. 53, compiled by Muhammad ʿAbdul Hakīm Khayyāl.

51. Qur'ān, 73:20.

52. Ibid, 7:179.

53. *Dīwān al-Mutanabbī,* 1:276.

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